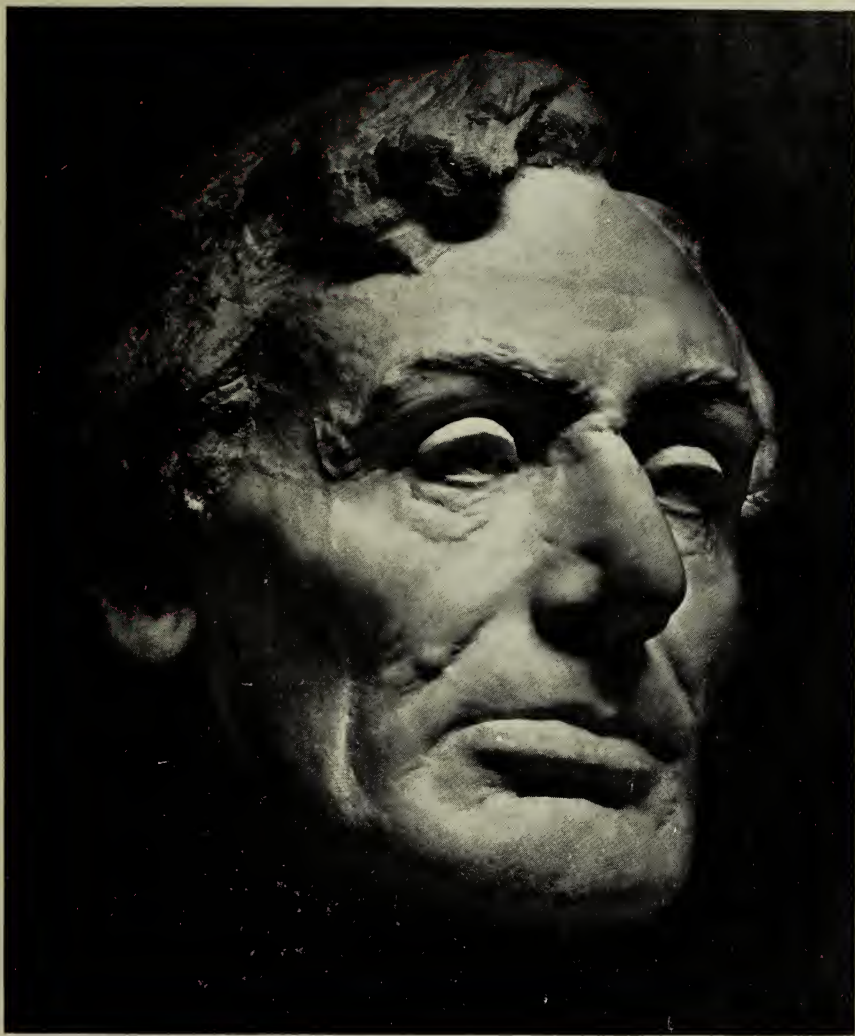


# THE GREAT AMERICAN MYTH



*The True Story of Lincoln's Murder*

By GEORGE S. BRYAN

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The circumstances surrounding the murder of Abraham Lincoln have, through the inadequacy of contemporary accounts, through deliberate misrepresentation from a variety of motives, and through public credulity, given rise to a plethora of legends, fantasies and falsehoods which go to make up the great American myth. No other single event in its history has so affected this country. The assassination of Lincoln stood out in people's minds in the same way that a solar eclipse or a convulsion of nature had stood out in earlier ages. From it people dated things before and after.

In this scholarly yet exciting volume Mr. Bryan, well known as an editor and historian, reconstructs the dramatic story of this great national calamity, winnowing the truth from the rank crop of contradictory evidence and distorted facts. At the same time he tells of the rise of the vast and mysterious body of mythology which has deluded the public for seventy-five years and which is still being given currency by so-called historians. He has spent years of study and research on this neglected historical area, and "The Great American Myth" is beyond question an important and original contribution to a subject which has been obscured by controversy, suspicion and confusion. In addition to undertaking a more thorough search of contemporary newspapers

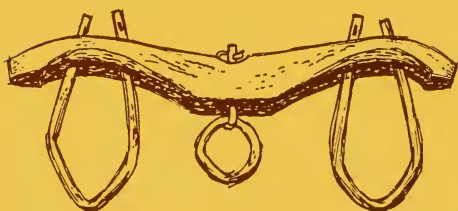
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THE GREAT  
AMERICAN  
MYTH







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# FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER

Entered according to the Act of Congress in the year 1864, by FRANK LESLIE, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

No. 503 VOL. XX.]

NEW YORK, MAY 20, 1865.

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13 YEARS 11 Cts.]

THE sketch below was furnished by one of the two officers employed in the duty of sinking the body of Booth in the middle of the Potomac. Although not authorised to divulge his name, I am able to vouch for the truth of the representation.

NEW YORK, May 10th. 1865.

F. LESLIE.



This imaginative front-page engraving in *Frank Leslie's* was entitled: "The Assassin's End—Final Disposition of the Body of John Wilkes Booth—an Authentic Sketch"



# THE GREAT AMERICAN MYTH

BY GEORGE S. BRYAN



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# Foreword

Always there have been men whom the world could not willingly let die. Such were Friedrich Barbarossa and Holger Danske. Such was the elusive Comte de Saint-Germain—that “odd man,” who, said Horace Walpole, “professes that he does not go by his right name,” and whom Andrew Lang styled “a will-o’-the-wisp.” Such was Ahasuerus, whom the Bishop of Schleswig met at Hamburg in 1542 and who was encountered near Salt Lake City by the Mormon O’Grady as late as 1868. Such were the Duke of Monmouth, Goffe the Regicide, Alexander the First of Russia, Jack Sheppard, the “Lost Dauphin” of France.

In a corner of the Luxembourg Gardens, amid the early chill of a December morning of 1815, Marshal Ney was executed by a firing-squad. But years afterward, in the distant Carolinas, folk recognized the “Bravest of the Brave” in the person of a mysterious school-teacher. Far-flung but vain was official search for Johann Salvator, Archduke of Austria, who had vanished with the bark *Santa Margarita*. Yet rumors were to tell of him as a miner in Canada and a grocer in Texas; as factory worker in Ohio, soldier with the Boers, patient in a New York hospital.

Rudolf of Habsburg and Lord Kitchener alike reached certainly their mortal end, but, with Arnold’s Scholar Gipsy, each

...long was seen to stray,  
Seen by rare glimpses.

Saturnine Ambrose Bierce, enigmatic Lawrence of Arabia were both in common talk held back from Orcus and somewhere con-

tinued to walk the earth. It is an oft-repeated tale—one that doubtless will continue to be heard.

Strange and involved beyond measure are the variations of it. The real Dmitri, heir to the throne of Ivan the Terrible, was murdered when a child. Yet three false Dmitris successively appeared. The first, actually crowned tsar, was killed in Moscow before a year was out, but a militant following promptly hailed the second. Moreover, although the two in no point resembled each other, the widow of the first soon acknowledged the second as her former husband!

Scores of witnesses (including the family solicitor, household and personal servants, country gentlemen, farmers, physicians, clergymen, and fellow-officers of the dragoon-guards) identified Arthur Orton, the Tichborne claimant, as Roger Tichborne. So, indeed, did Roger Tichborne's mother, the dowager Lady Tichborne; and though she did not live to be a witness, her affidavit was admitted in court. Thousands of Britons stood fiercely for Arthur Orton and contributed to a popular fund in his behalf. Nevertheless, he was *not* Roger Tichborne. A criminal trial duly revealed him as a monstrous perjurer; and he might have been indicted as a forger, too, had the Crown thus willed. Most of those who shouted for him ignored cheerfully the evidence in the case. As Lord Maugham puts it, *Quod homines credere volunt, id facile credunt*: Mankind readily believes whatever it wishes to believe.

This was true in ancient Iran, where the murder of the genuine Smerdis was so little known to the people at large that the usurper Gaumata boldly and successfully assumed the role of that prince. It was not less true in the United States of the earlier nineteenth century, whose newspapers for years displayed in manifold conflicting versions the legend of Theodosia Burr. In January 1813 the lady—among the distinguished women of her day and at that time wife of Governor Joseph Alston of South Carolina—went down with all hands in the schooner *Patriot* during a violent storm off Hatteras. But now and again through the columns of the press drifted reports of her as queen aboard a pirate craft, or with a band of lotos-eating sea-rovers in some nook of the West Indies or Latin America. Or she was identified with that “unknown female stranger” who in 1816 was carried from an ebony-black

ship into Gadsby's Inn at Alexandria, Virginia, by a cavalier who later, having placed above her grave a stone that bore no name, vanished as mysteriously as the two had come.

This country has had a part in "survival tales," and the South and Southwest have been especially congenial soil. Was Quantrell the outlaw actually a victim of his wounds? Was it surely Jesse James who was killed by the dirty little coward that shot Mister Howard? Was William Bonney (better known as Billy the Kid) beyond peradventure brought down at Fort Sumner by Sheriff Pat Garrett?

The familiar superficial chronicle of the murder of Abraham Lincoln was, with minor variations, quickly established in the books. It appeared to satisfy the general historians, who for the most part have vaulted lightly over the whole affair in some such fashion as:

President Lincoln was shot at Ford's Theatre in Washington on April 14th, 1865, by one John Wilkes Booth, an obscure and disreputable actor who was party to a conspiracy for the assassination of the President, the Vice-President, the Cabinet, and General Grant. Booth was pursued into Virginia and was shot when he refused to surrender. Four of the conspirators were hanged and four imprisoned.

Perhaps there might be an allusion to the "vengeance of the flag," the Stars and Stripes that tripped the murderer so that he was injured and, in pausing for surgical aid, lost hours of time as he fled. But at best it would be only sketchy mention of the event that, as by the sweep of a knife, marked a dividing line between two eras of national life—the deed through which a civilian at the solemn moment of victory deprived the Northern armies of their commander-in-chief, rekindled the spent wrath of war, and made peace more bitter than the sword.

The government went its official way, posting its spare bulletins, giving no heed to the quidnuncs and the newspapers. It might conceivably have issued, for public enlightenment, something like the British Admiralty's "white paper" in the Kitchener case; but it did not. The whole subject of Lincoln's murder at once became involved in a tangle of disorder and error, of falsehood and credulity, from which it has not yet been set free.

Writers presumably serious have informed us (among many

things) that Lincoln in 1861 proceeded to Washington by a roundabout course, over a dozen railroads, in order to avoid Baltimore; that he reached the capital at midnight and got to Willard's unrecognized; that Baltimore, knowing him for a just and good man, waited to receive him with true hospitality; that John Booth, by nature a killer, was also a "ham" actor rejected of managers and public; that the Confederate government, through its agents in Canada, found mischief for John's idle hands; that on the night of April 14th he was a member of the cast at Ford's Theatre and shot Lincoln from the stage; that Benn Pitman's volume is a complete, unbiased, and faithful record; that the testimony of such persons as Dunham, Montgomery, von Steinacker, Merritt, Mrs. Hudspeth, Duell, Weichmann, Evans, Norton, and Daniel J. Thomas is reliable and convincing.

No other phase of the life of Abraham Lincoln has been treated so neglectfully and meagerly as has his leaving of it, and even accredited biographers fail us here. It is not surprising that a hydra-like "mystery" early began to take form and with the years acquired substance. A myth evolved that for amplitude and vitality has no equal in the United States. Nor is it a thing "submerged"—limited, as has been inferred, to uncritical folks of small reading. Magazine editors have been impressed by it; critics have done it reverence; historical scholars have viewed it gingerly and with concessions. A veritable jungle-growth of "survival tales" has arisen and flourished. Like Ney and Rudolf and John C. Colt and the Duke of Portland (T. C. Druce), John Booth went on queerly prowling in queer spots.

It is the aim of this book to offer, on the basis of considerable independent survey of evidence (including material never before presented), (*a*) a new and authentic study of the affair of Lincoln's murder, with such account of preceding events and of the setting in which it took place as may help to a better understanding of it; and (*b*) the story of John Booth as he was, of what happened to him as it did really happen. The process has compelled the removal, either explicit or implied, of much fictional trumpery of one kind or another. Inaccuracies are at least not purposed.

THE GREAT  
AMERICAN  
MYTH



O darkly inspired who, pushing back the walls  
Of the theatre, hurried from the disordered stage,  
Dragging your tragedy like a burning cloak  
After you through the land, and now enduring as wage  
The taste of the thick black grief that cleaves to your soul—  
Not alone do you flee the voice of God which beats  
Against you like a maelstrom; following you,  
The secretly guilty slink along the streets,  
Appalled because the deed they desired is done.  
The madman must perform what the cowards are dreaming.  
Escape! but the earth shall offer no hiding-place,  
The winds are pointing the way, the birds are screaming  
Your whereabouts. If you would discover peace  
Once more a moment before the bloodhounds come,  
Throw back your head and look upon the stars  
Far and serene above the pandemonium.

HELENE MULLINS



# One . . . . FEDERAL CITY, 1860-1865

IN the fantastically dramatic eighteen-sixties there was an archaic town called Washington City. Already the period is half-legendary, and around the place have grown up highly imaginative accounts of contemporary events and persons. At times it has seemed that the more extravagantly lurid the version, the more likely was it to accord with common prepossessions regarding that entangled scene.

During the Civil War, Washington, Federal seat of civil government, was likewise headquarters of the Northern forces on land and sea. It became in effect a military post, ringed with a circumvallation of forts, between which stretched rifle-pits guarded by felled trees whose branches, trimmed and sharpened, confronted the enemy. So near the town was the war's opening battle that naïve Washingtonians actually rode forth in carriages to view the show. Quickly they realized that this conflict was to be no holiday.

From Washington, Union troops set out on their campaigns. There the Sanitary and Christian commissions had their main offices. Into its crowded hospitals (mostly temporary frame structures, though even churches and the museum of the Patent Office were utilized) the wounded were brought. Thither flocked spies, bounty-jumpers, contractors, sutlers, gamblers, dealers in patent camp-furniture, cranks, lobbyists, office-seekers, tailors, camp-followers, journalists, adventurers, "bummers," desperadoes, hangers-on. Thither went busybody politicians and wiseacres to instruct the Administration. Thither went plain folk to seek the wounded and missing; or sometimes, if it might be, to save the

condemned. After major battles the place was sure to be crowded with strangers. From the North you entered by way of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, whose station (they called it a "deepo") was on New Jersey Avenue, not far from the Capitol.

The Federal City had departed widely from Major L'Enfant's original design. As for the disorderly Capitol, its unweathered marble wings stood out in contrast with its freestone central portion; and there was a local superstition that the building never would be finished. Not until December of 1863 was Crawford's Genius of Freedom (or, if you prefer, Armed Liberty) set atop the newly completed iron dome. On the second floor, at the west of the rotunda, was the Congressional Library, then a modest affair of some 80,000 volumes. Before the east portico sat Greenough's twelve-ton image of the First President clad in a toga. The Capitol would appear to have had the most varied democratic uses. In its basement was stored flour from a Georgetown mill, said to have been intended for the Confederates. Under its roof incoming troops were billeted. In cold weather its well-warmed corridors were refuge for idlers. From the desperate heat of Washington summers there was no such escape.

The President's House (or Executive Mansion, as it came to be styled) was considered unhealthful. The suggestion had been made that it be turned into offices and the official residence transferred to Georgetown. Its grounds were ill-kept, and so late as 1869 it was termed a national disgrace. Between it and the southern end of the Treasury building were the presidential stables. At its northern side, in the center of a small garden, stood d'Angers' bronze figure of Jefferson. From the southern windows could be seen the Washington Monument—not as today an object of shining beauty but truncated at 178 feet (or less than one-third of its present height), resembling, as was said in "The Gilded Age," "a factory chimney with the top broken off." Frequent contemporary illustrations of the monument are deceptive not only in showing the entire shaft but also in adding at the base a colonnade, proposed but luckily abandoned, surmounted by an effigy of Washington in a triumphal chariot.

The War Department was officially located in a "musty old barrack" of drably painted brick at the corner of Pennsylvania

Avenue and Seventeenth Street; but because of wartime expansion various bureaus of the department were housed wherever they might find room. Back of the War building was that for the Navy. At the corner of Fifteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue the State Department had sorry accommodations.

Just beyond the east grounds of the Capitol was the Old Capitol prison. This "rat-trap" had a curious history. After the partial destruction of the Capitol by the British in 1814, Congress had occupied improvised apartments so thoroughly uncomfortable as to promote the idea of moving the seat of government—say to what then was the West, a region first made easily accessible by the Baltimore and Ohio. Thereupon a company of property-owners in Washington built for the use of Congress a domicile occupied by it until 1819 and thereafter known as the "Old Capitol." Converted into a boarding-house, it was the home of many senators and representatives. With the arrival of civil war it suffered change into a military jail, famed in wartime annals. For a while the romanticized Belle Boyd was here in durance, and so was the less romanticized but more effectual Mrs. Rose Greenhow. Adjoining it was the Carroll prison.

Although the city's population of 60,000 (1860) grew in wartime, irrespective of the army, to thrice that number, and although city water had slowly been introduced, drinking water continued to be taken from wells and springs. There were but two little sewers, whose contents most annoyingly backed up into the cellars and shops of Pennsylvania Avenue. Along the northern edge of the rubbish-strewn Mall ran an open ditch, an enlargement of Tiber Creek—"floating," says an eyewitness, "dead cats and all kinds of putridity and reeking with pestilential odors." John Hay wrote that by night through the south windows of the "White pest-house" the "ghosts of twenty thousand drowned cats come in."

Streets often ended abruptly or trailed away into country roads that, in the words of "Bull Run" Russell, were "literally nothing but canals in which earth and water were mixed together for depths varying from six inches to three feet." In rainy weather Pennsylvania Avenue, "a romping ground for the winds," turned to mire through which teamsters belabored long-suffering trans-

port animals and in which even light vehicles bogged down utterly. Said the *Intelligencer* of March 6th, 1865:

The attention of the public authorities is again called to the horrid condition of F street, between the Patent Office and the Treasury building, and in an especial measure to that portion from St. Patrick's to that quagmire at Eleventh street. There were some half a dozen coaches shipwrecked at the latter-named point yesterday, and among them was the coach of one of the foreign legations. This coach settled into the mud to the axle, and after vainly crying for planks to be brought, upon which an exit to solid land could be effected, one of the distinguished occupants was rescued by a huge negro, who, wading leg-deep to the coach, brought the foreign officer in full diplomatic regalia through the sea of mud upon his back to terra firma. The other occupant plunged into the muddy chasm, came out safe, but with the mud hanging sadly upon his gay costume, and presenting altogether "a sorry sight." The horses were safely rescued, and the carriage saved in a broken condition.

Livery stables flourished and hitching-racks were everywhere, for commonly men went about on horseback through the mud wherein pigs wandered "as freely as dogs." Public park-spots were rank with weeds. Sidewalks were of brick. At night Pennsylvania Avenue, flanked by many "oyster-bays," groggeries, and mean shops, was, with its few gas-lamps, the only lighted way; and the rural hand-lantern was still in use. The northwestern region was crossed by undrained marshes that were blamed for prevalent "chills-and-fever"—but nothing was done about them. "During the autumn, on the immediate banks of the Potomac," admitted a local guide-book, "bilious and intermitting fevers prevail to a considerable extent, but the malarian influences do not last long, and those who have become acclimated are seldom subject to these diseases."<sup>1</sup> From below the west side of the Capitol grounds reached another filthy waterway, emptying into the Eastern Branch of the Potomac.

"As in 1800 and 1850, so in 1860," wrote Henry Adams,<sup>2</sup> "the same rude society was camped in the same forest, with the same unfinished Greek temples for workrooms, and sloughs for roads." Which is quite in keeping with Tom Moore's epistle to Thomas Hume:

<sup>1</sup> Bohn's "Hand-Book" for 1860; pp. 81-82.

<sup>2</sup> "The Education of Henry Adams"; p. 99.



In fancy now, beneath the twilight gloom,  
Come, let me lead thee o'er this "second Rome!"  
Where tribunes rule, where dusky Davi bow,  
And what was Goose-Creek once is Tiber now:—  
This embryo capital, where Fancy sees  
Squares in morasses, obelisks in trees. . . .

Goldwin Smith characterized Civil-War Washington as "gloomy and miry."<sup>3</sup> In a letter of November 29th, 1861, Hay described it as "this miserable sprawling village which imagines itself a city because it is wicked, as a boy thinks he is a man when he smokes and swears."<sup>4</sup>

Though Washington was filled with wooden buildings and nondescript alleys, its fire protection was decidedly sketchy. Often some fine old mansion would be cheek by jowl with a frame shanty. Yet Bohn's "Hand-Book" thought that "the broad streets and avenues are undoubtedly of great service in admitting to every dwelling a free circulation of wholesome air"; and the *Intelligencer* rather pointedly stated that "in the city of New York 15,224 people live in cellars." Pennsylvania Avenue's more pretentious structures were chiefly on its northern side. Besides the Capitol and the President's House, the only really imposing public edifices in Washington were those of the Interior and the Treasury. The simpler architecture of an earlier day was giving place to a gingerbread ugliness, with ponderous cornices, grotesque moldings. Lonely upon the waste of the Mall rose the betowered and beturreted "Romanesque" pile of the Smithsonian Institution, quaintly deemed the city's handsomest fabric.

In keeping order during the emergency of war, the metropolitan police force of about 150 uniformed officers was supplemented by the provost marshal's office and the National Detective Bureau. This division of authority was naturally obstructive in many ways. The Capitol and its grounds were in the care of special police, employed by Congress. A United States marshal, aided by numerous deputies, was in charge of the city jail.

Cab fares were high, the cabs antediluvian. A street railway, with a five-cent fare, was introduced but long was viewed with disapproval by many of the old *régime*. It had been the custom

<sup>3</sup> *The Nation*, Feb. 7, 1907.

<sup>4</sup> Thayer, "The Life of John Hay"; I, 85.

for omnibuses to draw obligingly to the curb in answer to signaling hand or brandished parasol; but these odd new Yankee contraptions—"c'yar-boxes" as they were disdainfully termed—did nothing of the sort. Also, the question of their carrying Negro passengers became for a time a source of local difficulty. An act passed in 1862 freed slaves in the District and, on the basis of expert appraisal, former owners received payment—but only after having taken an oath of loyalty. A letter in the *Intelligencer* of May 6th, 1863, signed "A Daily Sufferer," declared that the street-railway company (of which banker Jay Cooke, whose firm had offices on Fifteenth Street, opposite the Treasury, had been a promoter), although it was supposed to restore paving between rails and for two feet on either side, had not done so, and that the resulting condition was "shocking." A reply on the 7th objected that "Sufferer" was unreasonable and blamed the trouble to some extent on the "soft" winter, which, "with the immense amount of travel over our streets," had "broken pavements everywhere." The writer added that streets through which the railway did not pass were even worse.

The directory for 1865 listed sixty-six hotels—many, no doubt, in the boarding-house class, for in Washington the boarding-house and its landlady were characteristic institutions; and plenty of homes had "roomers." Among hostelries of the better kind were Willard's (Pennsylvania Avenue, between Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets), where several Presidents, including Lincoln, had put up; the Kirkwood House (Pennsylvania Avenue at Twelfth Street), abode of Vice-President Johnson; and the National (Pennsylvania Avenue and Sixth Street), which had been favored by Southerners. The dining rooms were unadorned halls set with long tables. Dancing parties known as "hops" were given by the managements and became the vogue. Willard's in its advertisements claimed to be the largest hotel in the United States, with quarters for 1,200 guests. The National, also capacious, was perhaps the only hotel ever to have given its name to a malady—the "National Hotel disease," supposed to have had its origin in the inadequate sewerage facilities of the city. From 5 to 7:30 o'clock p. m., the public rooms of Willard's were a favorite resort of news-gathering correspondents for the out-of-town press. The Kimmel



House was the usual stopping-place of those engaged in smuggling contraband by way of Port Tobacco into the Confederacy.

Restaurants and barrooms abounded. The directory for 1865 has four pages of them in its classified section. Wines and liquors were cheap—the liquors often of the poorest quality. To be sure, it was contrary to regulations to sell to men in uniform. Signs read: NOTHING SOLD TO SOLDIERS, or otherwise to that effect (as, NO LIQUORS SOLD TO—followed by cuts representing the three arms of the service). Yet regulations were ignored so long as the only penalty was a few hours' detention in a guardhouse or a few dollars' fine imposed by a police justice. The shabbiest boozing-dens clustered around the governmental storehouses, repair shops, stables, and corrals. On April 4th, 1865, the day after Richmond's fall, the Washington correspondent of the *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis) wrote to his paper: "There's a strange affinity between patriotism and whiskey. I do not believe I am beyond the mark when I state there were five thousand drunken men to be seen on Pennsylvania Avenue yesterday." <sup>5</sup>

In the Potomac and the Eastern Branch, between raw banks, rode, from 1862 onward, war vessels known as monitors—craft that did indeed affect the whole trend of naval architecture and the course of naval warfare but that undoubtedly were as little like ships as anything that ever floated. The Navy Yard works (around on the Eastern Branch, at the foot of Eighth Street, east) labored full-tilt at iron plates for these "cheese-boxes on rafts" or at the casting of Dahlgren guns, familiarly known as "soda-water bottles" and now almost as outlandish-seeming as "Mons Meg" or the great bombarde of Ghent. Close by, from the foot of Eleventh Street (east), the wooden Navy Yard bridge crossed the Eastern Branch to Uniontown. From Maryland Avenue to the Virginia shore the wooden "Long Bridge" spanned the Potomac.

In respect of the theater, Washington City was indeed some-

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by N. McN. Ring in "The Religious Affiliations of Our Presidential Assassins" (script in the Library of Congress: St. Louis; p. 3). (This may also be found in *Mid-America* for Oct. and Nov. 1933.)—In the McLellan Collection is a manuscript letter from Acting Ensign H. F. Curtis to his sister Ann in which, writing from the U.S.S. *Gamma* at New Bern, N. C., he says: "You speak of liquor. I wish you could form an idea (which is impossible unless you are here) of the amount used in both Army & Navy by officers. . . . I have not met 12 who did not drink—" (Apr. 18, 1865). See also Russell, "My Diary North and South"; pp. 481, 577.

what less primitive than the Washington of seventy years later. It had two active legitimate houses where stock companies were regularly maintained, where leading players of the day appeared as "guests," and where grand opera was sporadically performed by traveling companies. These were the rival Grover's (on Pennsylvania Avenue, between Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets) and Ford's (on Tenth Street, one and a half "squares" north of Pennsylvania Avenue, between E and F). Also there were the old Washington Theatre (at the corner of Eleventh and C, near Pennsylvania Avenue), Canterbury Music Hall, Oxford Hall, and Seaton Hall (where recitals and concerts were usually given and where, too, occasional magicians, mediums, and ventriloquists were advertised). Other auditoriums were Odd Fellows' Hall and the concert hall at Willard's (seating 800); and lecturers frequently spoke in one of the larger of the numerous churches. The hall of the Patent Office was the scene of inaugural balls. Circuses exhibited on lots at the foot of Sixth Street or at the corner of Sixth Street and New York Avenue.

During the winter of 1861-1862 a group organizing as the Washington Lecture Association presented a course of lectures by prominent figures of the lyceum platform. With the aid of Owen Lovejoy, Schuyler Colfax, and Lincoln, the large auditorium of the Smithsonian Institution was obtained over the protest of Director Joseph Henry, who insisted that at every lecture the chairman inform the audience that the Smithsonian was not responsible for the sentiments expressed. Accordingly, the Rev. John Pierpont, the association's president, opened each lecture with this formula: "Ladies and Gentlemen: I am requested by Professor Henry to announce that the Smithsonian Institution is not in any way responsible for this course of lectures. I do so with pleasure, and desire to add that the Washington Lecture Association is in no way responsible for the Smithsonian Institution." Mrs. Charles Eames, wife of a Washington lawyer who often acted as counsel for the Navy and Treasury departments, was hostess of a salon in which kindred spirits foregathered.

Like other American towns of the period, Washington City had in its interiors reached the apogee of bad taste. It displayed heavy curtains of Nottingham lace; marble-topped tables; wax

flowers under bell glass; chairs and sofas of horrendous design and upholstered in slippery, tufted haircloth; ingrain or Brussels carpets adorned with bright cabbage-roses. Black walnut was the wood most used for cabinetwork; walls were covered with papers of a dispirited ugliness. The Executive Mansion, in whose second story Lincoln had his office, differed only in being on a somewhat more elaborate scale. Stoddard, one of the private secretaries, noted that during Lincoln's term the "reception" part had been refitted but that most of the house inside had a worn, untidy look; the basement carrying "somewhat the air of an old and unsuccessful hotel."

Against such background moved civilians in generally somber clothes (including shawls for chill weather), stovepipe hats, high boots inside trousers—often with spurs, because men rode so much. Light-colored pantaloons and embroidered waistcoats were, however, in evidence. The women wore *chignons*, bonnets, frocks of heavy materials, and vast, tricky hoops. Everywhere were soldiers—soldiers in zouave outfits; soldiers with tunics flying to the breeze; soldiers in all sorts of neckgear and girt with tasseled sashes; soldiers garbed, it seems, very much as they pleased—reaching the extreme, perhaps, in General Custer, with his wide-awake, his long hair falling over the broad collar of a blue flannel shirt, and a scarlet cravat as big as a muffler. The gray of paroled Confederate officers was an everyday sight. Beards of all cuts and no cut, whiskers of a sweeping luxuriance, were in the mode; mustaches ran to the heavy, drooping pattern. A popular song was "The captain with his whiskers cast a sly glance at me"—the accompaniment played on a square piano. (Stoddard was convinced that "all the young women of Washington, and some that are older," knew "more or less" how to play the piano.)

Through the streets passed interminably mules, cattle, army stores, wagon trains. At all hours might be heard the footbeats of infantry on the march, the jangling of cavalry accouterments, the thud of hooves, the jar of artillery, the throb of drums. And there were funerals—a general's with a band and his staff in attendance, and an escort with arms reversed; or for a dozen privates at a time, their massed coffins accompanied by a corporal and a squad of ten men. "On the hills around . . . were the

white tents of soldiers, and field fortifications and camps, and in every direction could be seen the brilliant colors of the national flag.”<sup>6</sup>

Washington City had been of old divided against itself and traditionally lacking in community spirit. With the onset of war, Southern members departed from Capitol Hill; but Confederate runners moved discreetly about their business, Confederate agents lurked. In the Washington of a decade before, young Henry Adams had noted the heavy odor of the catalpas in the May sunshine. Heavier now was the atmosphere of domestic malice. The place was a micro-chaos in which might happen strange and terrible things.

<sup>6</sup> I. N. Arnold, “The Life of Abraham Lincoln”; p. 452.



## TWO • A PRESIDENT-ELECT TAKES A JOURNEY

AT Springfield by the Sangamon, on the night of November 6th, 1860, Candidate Lincoln sat in the telegraph office, musing over the bulletins as the sounder clicked them in. Unfavorable dispatches from New York had depressed him briefly; but before long a turn had come, and by twelve o'clock he knew the Presidency was his. Out in the streets, wreathing lines of men, linked arm to arm, chanted over and over, "Oh, ain't we glad we joined the Republicans!"—to the tune of "Oh, ain't I glad I got out of the wilderness!" With that firm, springless gait of his, but more buoyantly than usual, Lincoln walked home to the frame house at the corner of Eighth and Jackson Streets—the only house he ever owned—and called out, "Mary—Mary! We are elected!"

Yes, it was victory; but because the Democrats had been split between Breckinridge and Douglas it was a victory by a minority of the popular vote. Many a Northern Democrat never forgave Lincoln for his presumptuous defeat of the Little Giant. Southern Democrats termed him a sectional President. He once compared his attitude to that of a backwoods surveyor who, as he hunted for a corner, kept a weather-eye open for prowling Indians. Decisively his election marked the cleavage between slave states and free. It set the free states at last in power. It made widely vocal the Southern disdain and hatred of Lincoln himself.

During the campaign, mutterings had been heard. In June the Hon. John Townsend delivered at Rockville, South Carolina, an address on the provocative topic "The South Alone Should Govern the South." In August, Texans were stirring. One protested:

I believe I am not in the dark when I say that if Lincoln is elected, it will take five hundred thousand troops to inaugurate him. To believe that the South would submit to it, with the train of calamities which must of necessity follow, is to believe that we are paltroons [*sic*], and destitute of every sentimental [sentiment of?] patriotism. [J.W.S., Fort Worth]

Another asserted:

It has now become a settled conviction in the South *that this Union cannot subsist one day after Abe Lincoln has been declared President*, if God, in his infinite wisdom, should permit him to live that long. . . .<sup>1</sup> [Dated at Marshall, August 12th]

By December the mutterings had swelled to voices of portent. Somebody wrote to the Cincinnati *Commercial* that Lincoln would be shot during the inaugural exercises. Anonymous threats enlivened Lincoln's mail. In its Christmas Day issue the Richmond *Enquirer* (1860) contributed to the fund of seasonal good will the meaningful question:

. . . If the Governor of Maryland [Thomas H. Hicks], influenced by timidity or actuated by treachery, shall longer delay to permit the people of that State to protect themselves, can there not be found men bold and brave enough to unite with Virginians in seizing the capitol at Washington and the Federal defences within the two States?

Such thoughts were in men's minds.

Caleb Cushing had been sent to South Carolina as Buchanan's representative, with the object of delaying, if possible, the passage of the ordinance of secession. His mission was hopeless. The ordinance was passed, as we know, on December 20th—the day on which Howell Cobb, Secretary of the Treasury, quit the Cabinet in which he had remained too long. Upon Cushing's return to Washington it was said that Senator Louis T. Wigfall of Texas (a South Carolinian by birth) divulged to a group of kindred souls his plan for Buchanan's abduction. While the President was held prisoner, Vice-President Breckinridge would take the executive chair; and, as Wigfall put it, the South would not be "trapped into a war." But properly to manage the affair, and to get the

<sup>1</sup> Townsend's address was printed in pamphlet form at Charleston (1860; pp. 64). (See also his "The Doom of Slavery in the Union: Its Safety Out of It." Cf. the *Evening Day-Book*, Sept. 8, 1860.)



captive expeditiously out of Washington, Wigfall felt he needed the aid of the Secretary of War, John B. Floyd of Virginia. When the scheme was unfolded, Floyd absolutely refused to have anything to do with it. Thus, at all events, ran the story which that unknown chronicler "Public Man" entered in his contemporary journal. Passages from this journal (kept during the autumn of 1860 and the winter of 1860-1861) were printed in the *North American Review* in 1879. "Public Man" was supposed to have been an office-holder in Washington, but his name was never revealed.<sup>2</sup>

A later and embellished version had it that Buchanan was to have been taken to a remote farmhouse, far in a secluded valley of the Blue Ridge. Then Breckinridge, who had himself been a candidate, would refashion the Cabinet, repudiate Lincoln's election, and forthwith be inaugurated. Lincoln, if he succeeded in reaching Washington, would be seized and imprisoned. Thus the Federal government would without bloodshed pass to the South and secession would become unnecessary. This variant (of rather doubtful authority) was supposed to have been traced to one Godard Bailey, chief clerk of the bureau of Indian affairs when artful Jacob Thompson was Secretary of the Interior.<sup>3</sup>

"Conspiracy," "abduction"—these obviously were notions that had penetrated the familiar gossip of official circles. On December 29th Senator William H. Seward was writing to Lincoln:

A plot is forming to seize the capital on or before the 4th of March, and this, too, has its accomplices in the public councils. I could tell you more particularly than I dare write, but you must not imagine that I am giving you suspicions and rumors. Believe me I know what I write!

In like vein he wrote to Mrs. Seward: "Treason is all around and amongst us; and plots to seize the capital and usurp the Government." <sup>4</sup> On that same day the discredited Floyd at last resigned. That companies "strongly tinctured with secessionism" were drilling in Washington is the statement of L. A. Gobright, manager of the local office of the Associated Press and hence in a posi-

<sup>2</sup> See the *Review* for August 1879; pp. 131-132.

<sup>3</sup> *The World* (New York), Feb. 21, 1892, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> F. W. Seward, "Seward at Washington"; p. 488.

tion to know whereof he spoke. They looked, he says, "for a favorable opportunity to strike a blow at the Government."<sup>5</sup>

Northerners tarrying below the line were made aware of a general mood of scornful defiance. For example: In January 1861, while on a steamboat trip from Cairo to New Orleans, Mrs. Jane M. Johns heard it confidently said that Lincoln would never be inaugurated—that he would not get so far as Washington. "Washington City will be ours in less than a month. . . . When Washington is ours, Virginia and Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri will fall into line. Illinois is ready too, and the Mississippi valley with the whole northwest will be in the Confederacy." In New Orleans they asked whether Lincoln could read, always went barefoot, looked like a baboon, had a Negro wife.<sup>6</sup>

On January 3rd Lincoln wrote to Seward from Springfield:

I have been considering your suggestions as to my reaching Washington somewhat earlier than is usual. It seems to me the inauguration is the most dangerous point for us. Our adversaries have us now clearly at a disadvantage. On the second Wednesday of February, when the votes should be officially counted, if the two Houses refuse to meet at all, or meet without a quorum of each, where shall we be? I do not think that this counting is constitutionally essential to the election; but how are we to proceed in absence of it?<sup>7</sup>

Late in the month he sent Thomas S. Mather, adjutant-general of Illinois, to Washington. Mather was to see General Scott, learn precisely what steps were being taken to guarantee an orderly inauguration, and discover whether the General was "really and unreservedly" Unionist. Though propped on pillows, the ailing warrior left no doubt whatever.

He said to Mather: "You may present my compliments to Mr. Lincoln when you reach Springfield, and tell him that I shall expect him to come on to Washington as soon as he is ready. Say to him also, that, when once here, I shall consider myself responsible for his safety. If necessary, I shall plant cannon at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue and if any of the Maryland or Virginia gentlemen who have become so threatening and troublesome of

<sup>5</sup> "Recollections of Men and Things"; p. 286.

<sup>6</sup> "Personal Recollections"; pp. 86-87, 90.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolay and Hay, "Abraham Lincoln: Complete Works"; vol. i, p. 663.

late, show their heads, or even venture to raise a finger, I shall blow them to Hell!"<sup>8</sup>

The House of Representatives appointed on January 9th the Select Committee of Five, which heard evidence regarding "an alleged hostile organization against the Government within the District of Columbia." The testimony given did not in the opinion of the committee disclose the existence at that time of a definite organized plot to seize the capital. On February 14th the committee's report was laid upon the table. Referring to the time as one when "the very air" was "filled with rumors" and when individuals were given to "the most extravagant expressions of fears and threats," it revealed a number of significant things.

John B. Blake, who, as commissioner of public buildings and grounds, was head of the Capitol police, said he had examined a suspicious character named Columbus Edelin, *alias* Lum Cooper. Edelin, it was alleged, had offered to shoot Lincoln if nobody else would. When Blake had questioned Edelin about this, Edelin had replied, rather evasively, that no man dared accuse him to his face.

Mayor James G. Berret of Washington spoke of certain loosely formed organizations that drilled regularly in the city. One of these, the National Volunteers, had before the Presidential election been a political club. The Volunteers had adopted a resolution by which they were pledged to go with Maryland and Virginia in case these seceded. Col. Charles P. Stone said that S. P. Hanscom, a newspaperman in Washington, told him that the Volunteers had an enrollment of some 1,500. Stone, who was on Scott's staff, was colonel and inspector-general of the militia of the District.

Governor Thomas H. Hicks of Maryland testified that Judge Handy of Mississippi had assured him Lincoln would never be inducted into office. Southerners did not intend, according to the Judge, that Lincoln should "have dominion" over them. Asked whether he understood this to involve force or secession, Hicks replied:

<sup>8</sup> C. W. Elliott, "Winfield Scott"; p. 688. Jesse Weik, "How Lincoln Was Convinced of General Scott's Loyalty," in *Century Magazine*, Feb. 1911; pp. 593-594. Scott had told L. E. Chittenden, "While I command the army, there will be no revolution in the city of Washington."

He [Handy] did not explain. I was left to inference altogether; but judging by all that I knew, I believed it could not be prevented otherwise than by violence.

For his own part, Hicks said, he was firmly of belief that an effort had actually at one time been made to form an organization having for its object an attack on the Federal government and on Federal property in the District.

John H. Goddard, chief of police, made the rather surprising admission that he had not one detective officer on his force. Among other witnesses was Cipriano Ferrandini of Baltimore, who had been summoned as one acquainted with under-cover activities there.<sup>9</sup>

On February 4th (by which date six more states had followed South Carolina into the new Confederacy) the Peace Convention assembled in Washington. At Virginia's invitation, twenty-one states—seven slave and fourteen free—had sent delegates. Ex-President John Tyler was chosen to the chair. In an effort to protect "Southern rights," the convention recommended an article of amendment to the Constitution, but this did not meet with support in Congress, nor did it go far enough to please the South. Furthermore, with Virginia a condition of any agreement had been that the right of secession be fully conceded.

The House on February 11th adopted resolutions requesting President Buchanan to communicate his reasons for assembling in Washington a large body of troops. Had he any information of "a conspiracy upon the part of any portion of the citizens of this country" to seize the capital and prevent Lincoln's due inauguration? The President referred these matters to Joseph Holt, Kentuckian and Democrat but stanchly Unionist, who, having served as Postmaster-General in Buchanan's Cabinet, had on Floyd's departure taken over the portfolio of War.

Holt in his reply of the 18th said that on the basis of information "from many parts of the country" and "of a most conclusive character" he believed in the existence of an organization that purposed to seize Washington. He aptly pointed out that for three months open revolution had in fact been in progress in the South.

<sup>9</sup> Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives, 36th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. ii, rept. 79; pp. 3-19, 125, 132-139, 166-178.





*From a photograph by Matthew Brady*

*U. S. Signal Corps*

## THE CAPITOL AT WASHINGTON AS IT LOOKED IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CIVIL WAR

This view from the west shows the uncompleted dome, the "open ditch" of Tiber Creek, and (in the middle distance) the "National Greenhouses"





The President in a special message to the House (March 1st) submitted that, exclusive of marines properly stationed at the Navy Yard, the troops numbered in grand total but 653! This small force was to "act as a *posse comitatus*, in strict subordination to the civil authority, for the purpose of preserving peace and order in the city of Washington, should this be necessary before or at the period of the inauguration of the President-elect."

He insisted that not only the peace and order of the city and the security of the inauguration but also the safety of Federal property and of government archives demanded that he adopt "precautionary measures." Unfavorable though its location might be in many respects, Washington had to be maintained as the seat of government. If so maintained, it must be defended against capture, and the government must be protected from affront or harm.

When the electoral votes were counted on February 13th, Scott, as good as his word, had soldiers on guard at every entrance to the Capitol. Besides representatives and senators, no one was admitted but those holding tickets signed by the Speaker or the Vice-President. In front of the Old Capitol two battalions of artillery were stationed. A noisy mob had been streaming in from Virginia and Maryland to fraternize with the local rabble and await events; but Breckinridge, as presiding officer of the Senate, duly announced his rival's election, and the day ended without a clash.

Washington's Birthday was celebrated in Washington's own Federal City far less impressively and spontaneously than had been usual. The militia paraded in the morning; the regulars in the afternoon, and not in mass formation but as detached units. Even so, John Tyler formally rebuked Buchanan because United States troops had been allowed to march at all.

In faraway Springfield, February 11th dawned gloomily, with a cold rain falling. At five minutes before eight Abraham Lincoln stepped from the depot of the Great Western Railway to his special train of a baggage car and a coach. On the rear platform of the coach he removed his tall hat and for an appreciable time stood silent. Among the thousand neighbors there gathered to bid him farewell, every man waited with bared head.

Then in the manner distinctive of him at his best—a manner, as

Lord Charnwood has well said, like that of great drama—Lincoln began to speak. "No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting." The words moved in a somber cadence. . . . "I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. . . ."

His route lay through Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Columbus, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Buffalo. Under date of February 1st, Washington's Mayor Berret, troubled by unverified reports, had written to John W. Garrett, president of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad:

I learn that the President Elect until very recently contemplated passing over your road from Wheeling to this city, and that owing to rumored intentions on the part of citizens of Maryland and Virginia to interfere with his travel to our Capital, you were induced to make diligent inquiry as to the truth of these threats. If correctly informed, will you do me the favor to state the result of your inquiries touching this matter?

In a toplofty screed that reads like puffery from the road's advertising department, Garrett had replied that there was not and never had been the least foundation for any of the rumors to which Berret referred.

They are the simple inventions of those who are agents in the West for other lines, and are set on foot more with a hope of interfering with the trade and travel on the shortest route to the seaboard than with any desire to promote the safety and comfort of the President elect. . . .

Our road is regarded, both in Maryland and Virginia, as a monument of the common enterprise of their people and as the means of a common prosperity. This feeling is of itself sufficient to protect the travel and freight of the road from all annoyance. I can only regret that the purpose of the President elect to travel by another route should give countenance to stories which are in every respect unfounded.

You may be assured that whatever is done in Maryland, in view of the unhappy crisis existing in the country, will be done with a steady regard to all the rights of persons and property of all sections of the land.

Thus the dogmatic Garrett, not neglectful of the sweet uses of publicity but decidedly without prophetic gift.

Berret furnished the correspondence to Washington's *National Intelligencer*, which tartly commented that public hospitalities had been tendered Lincoln by many towns not on the line of the B. & O., and that there was nothing to show he ever had designed to go by Garrett's road. It added that Buchanan would have been "derelict in public duty" if he had not taken "precautionary measures" against possible disorder on or before March 4th. "Very idle seemed the intimation conveyed to Mr. Secretary Floyd in an anonymous letter foreshadowing the descent of John Brown on Harper's Ferry, but subsequent events proved that a small force at that point would have been more effective to preserve the public property than any letter signed by the President of that road."<sup>10</sup>

The traveling party included Mrs. Lincoln; the three boys—Willie, Tad (christened Thomas, nicknamed Tadpole), and Robert; John G. Nicolay, Lincoln's secretary, and Nicolay's assistant, John Hay; Judge David Davis, one of Lincoln's campaign managers; Capt. John Pope and Maj. David Hunter; the picturesque Ephraim E. Ellsworth, who had read law in Lincoln's office and for whom Lincoln was soon to mourn; the Hon. Norman B. Judd, close personal friend and trusted adviser; Col. Edwin V. Sumner, a testy veteran of the Mexican War; and that prairie giant Ward H. Lamon, a partner of Lincoln's and by himself regarded as his chief's particular escort, bodyguard, and *fidus Achates*.

Stories got about of an attempt to wreck the train between Springfield and Indianapolis, of a hand grenade discovered in a carpetbag. But Lamon records that none on board ever heard of these "murderous doings." Neither Lamon nor anyone else of the party then knew that Judd had received at Cincinnati a letter from Baltimore—a letter that made upon him a deep impression.<sup>11</sup>

In the state house at Columbus, Lincoln and his suite were nearly crushed. As the party left Pittsburg the "solid mass" of spectators was "almost impenetrable." Matters at Buffalo were worse—much worse. There a welcoming crowd of some ten thousand had gathered at the station, and so inadequate were police arrangements that, when the party detrained, the wildest confu-

<sup>10</sup> Feb. 6 (p. 3) and 7 (p. 3).

<sup>11</sup> Lamon's "Life of Abraham Lincoln"; p. 507.

sion ensued. In getting to the carriages, Major Hunter had a shoulder dislocated. Only through the efforts of those immediately around him did Lincoln himself escape injury. These experiences were object lessons as to the tragic helplessness of a few individuals when hustled in this fashion. At Buffalo a second letter from Baltimore was delivered to Judd, who still kept his own counsel.<sup>12</sup>

From Buffalo to Albany it was a triumphal jaunt. There were bands; dignitaries with ribbon badges; more bands; torchlight processions; a live eagle. The run of thirty-seven miles from Buffalo to Batavia was scheduled at thirty minutes—a display of exuberance that must have given the party a good shaking. After leaving Utica, it was observed that the “Illinois prodigy” had donned a new coat and hat. As the train entered Schenectady a cannon was fired and in one car several window panes were broken.

In the evening of Monday, February 18, Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln received at Albany’s Delavan House. That very night at the little Gayety Theatre on Green Street a young actor—astonishingly young for stardom—was opening the second week of his first engagement in the city. He had put up at Stanwix Hall, where he had been so outspoken in his extreme secessionist views that the Gayety’s management was annoyed.

“Is not this a Democratic city?” he asked Treasurer Cuyler.

“Democratic, yes,” Cuyler answered. “But disunion—no!”<sup>13</sup>

It is unlikely that Lincoln and he set eyes upon each other at this time. The day was to come when their paths would cross—in that strange maelstrom of Washington. Of Lincoln the Albany *Atlas and Argus* (Democratic) remarked editorially:

He does not look as if he had the bodily vigor to stand the pressure upon him. He evidently has not the superiority of nature which compels respect and commands isolation, even amid crowds. Rude hands jostled him and his underlings commanded him; and all about him the struggle was who was to control him, no one feeling too low for the task!<sup>14</sup>

At Troy the party changed from the Northern Railroad to the

<sup>12</sup> *New York Times*, Feb. 16, 18; *Evening Post* (New York), Feb. 18; *New York Daily News*, Feb. 18.

<sup>13</sup> H. B. Phelps, “Players of a Century. A Record of the Albany Stage”; pp. 324 *et seq.*

<sup>14</sup> Feb. 20; p. 2.



Hudson River line. Outwardly the President's car, "one of the handsomest, perhaps, ever run in this country," was trimmed with bunting and national flags, and its interior was draped in blue bespangled with silver stars. The wood-burning locomotive "Union" (like steamboats, American locomotives in those days had their names) was also generously bedecked. Thus in splendor Lincoln drew down to New York, where, not quite a year before, he had won his audience in Cooper Union.<sup>15</sup> Long afterward, Dr. Theodore Cuyler told of seeing him as he stood in the barouche that took him slowly down Broadway to the Astor House—"the most august and majestic figure that my eyes have ever beheld." To Cuyler, thinking back, he had "a solemn, faraway look, as if he discerned the toils and trials that awaited him." "There was very little cheering as Mr. Lincoln passed," wrote George William Curtis, "and he looked at the people with a weary, melancholy air, as if he felt already the heavy burden of his duty."<sup>16</sup>

Mayor Fernando Wood in a homily of greeting at the City Hall struck no highly exalted note. "All her [New York's] material interests," he informed his guest, "are paralyzed. Her commercial greatness is endangered. . . . We fear that if the Union dies, the present supremacy of New York may perish with it." He hoped the new President would prove equal to the crisis, but manifestly was none too sanguine.

Phineas Barnum, whose American Museum was at Broadway and Ann Street, diagonally across from the Astor House, announced on the 20th:

PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN has informed

Mr. Barnum that he will positively

VISIT THE MUSEUM THIS DAY.

Those who would see him should come early.

Never, perhaps, in all his adventurous career, did the great showman surpass the audacity of this touch. . . . Though the President-elect was unable to appear with the other exhibits, Robert

<sup>15</sup> Henry C. Bowen, publisher of the *Independent*, thought that "More zealous Republicans were probably made within twenty-four hours after the delivery of that speech than existed before in the whole city."

<sup>16</sup> Cuyler's "Recollections of a Long Life"; p. 142. Curtis' letter to Prof. R. R. Wright (first published in the *Independent* of Apr. 4, 1895).



dropped in during the morning, Mrs. Lincoln went, and the two juvenile Lincolns sat with Barnum in his private box in the Lecture Room to view that thrilling novelty "The Woman in White."

In the evening there was a performance of grand opera at the Academy of Music. Signor Muzio, impresario and conductor, advertised a "Grand Gala Night," promising enthusiastically that the building would be illuminated "as on the occasion of the Prince of Wales Ball." Lincoln and those with him (Mrs. Lincoln was presiding at an Astor House reception) occupied a roomy proscenium box on the right-hand side of the house. The Misses Phillips and Hinckley sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," a large flag descended from the flies, Lincoln bowed and "with evident satisfaction" gestured toward the colors. The piece was Verdi's new *opus* "Un Ballo in Maschera," with Brignoli in the cast. The libretto dealt with the murder of a ruler—to be sure, an admitted villain.

The younger Lincolns, accompanied by a nurse and a police officer, went to Laura Keene's Theatre. There the attractions were "Seven Sisters," with elaborate scenic effects, and "Uncle Sam's Magic Lantern," a series of historical tableaux. Miss Keene was a gifted woman, known not only as an uncommonly intelligent actress but also as manager and playwright. In 1858 she had produced in New York with outstanding success Tom Taylor's "Our American Cousin," in which Jefferson had appeared as Asa Trenchard and E. A. Sothorn made a hit as Lord Dundreary.

Meanwhile, Norman Judd had been attending to confidential business. Not long after the party arrived at the Astor House, he learned that a lady wished to see him. She presented a note of introduction from Allan Pinkerton, founder and principal of Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, and she proved to be Mrs. Kate Warne, superintendent of Pinkerton's women operatives. Pinkerton had written the two letters from Baltimore that Judd had received *en route*, and Mrs. Warne had been sent to arrange an interview between the men. Judd told her he would accompany Lincoln from the Philadelphia station to the Continental Hotel; and it was settled that Pinkerton would then specify a meeting place.

Early on the morning of the 21st, in a special ferryboat—with,

of course, the inescapable band—the party crossed to Jersey City. Thence it went by the New Jersey Railroad to Newark, where there was a parade of a mile along Broad Street from the upper station to the lower; then by way of New Brunswick and Princeton to Trenton, where Lincoln addressed both senate and assembly and a banquet was held in the Trenton House; and on to Philadelphia. As Lincoln was riding toward the Continental Hotel, where the Prince of Wales suite had been reserved for him, a young man ran to the side of the carriage and gave Judd a bit of paper on which was:

St. Louis Hotel. Ask for J. H. Hutchinson.

Nearly upsetting two officers, George Burns of the American Telegraph Company had without difficulty got by the police lines, but it happened that his errand was peaceful.

In "Hutchinson's" room Judd found Allan Pinkerton and Samuel M. Felton, president of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad—the only direct route from the North to Baltimore. For over an hour the three consulted, then Judd proposed that Pinkerton and he have a talk with Lincoln. At the Continental a reception was in full swing, and lobby and stairways were jammed. Pinkerton and Judd went by the servants' entrance to Judd's room on the second floor and Lincoln was summoned from his interminable handshaking. He came, forcing his way along the corridor, and the door was shut.

It was an incredulous Lincoln—incredulous but not alarmed—who heeded and questioned. The story unfolded to him was one that by some writers has been slightly dismissed as implausible if not preposterous. It led to an episode of definite significance in Lincoln's life—bound up in many ways with Lincoln's mortal fate; but both story and episode have been so garbled and belied as to form a kind of prologue to the Great American Myth.

According to the published schedule, Lincoln next day (Washington's Birthday) was to raise a new flag over Independence Hall at six in the morning (urban Americans rose earlier then)—a flag with thirty-four stars, the latest being for Kansas. He would then go by the Pennsylvania Central to Harrisburg, where he would

address the legislature. The day following (Saturday), he was to travel by special train over the Northern Central from Harrisburg to Baltimore, reaching Baltimore at about one in the afternoon. From the Calvert depot, at the northeast corner of Calvert and Franklin Streets, he was to ride with Mayor Brown in an open carriage to the Eutaw House, and after dinner there he would leave for Washington at three by special train from the Camden Street station of the Baltimore and Ohio.<sup>17</sup> Pinkerton and Judd were of one mind: this itinerary must now be revised. Lincoln's own account of the discussion is forthright and circumstantial.

"Pinkerton," he said, "informed me that a plan had been laid for my assassination, the exact time when I expected to go through Baltimore being publicly known. He was well informed as to the plan, but did not know that the conspirators would have pluck enough to execute it. He urged me to go right through with him to Washington that night. I didn't like that. I had made engagements to visit Harrisburg, and go from there to Baltimore, and I resolved to do so. I could not believe that there was a plot to murder me. I made arrangements, however, with Mr. Judd for my return to Philadelphia the next night, if I should be convinced that there was danger in going through Baltimore. I told him that if I should meet at Harrisburg, as I had at other places, a delegation to go with me to the next place (then Baltimore), I should feel safe, and go on."<sup>18</sup>

Judd says he told Lincoln: "If you follow the course suggested—of proceeding to Washington to-night—you will necessarily be subjected to the scoffs and sneers of your enemies and the disapproval of your friends, who cannot be made to believe in the existence of so desperate a plot." Lincoln answered resignedly that he "could stand anything that was necessary," but said it was impossible for him to go that night.

In the crowd that milled about the halls and parlors he encountered Frederick Seward. "We went together to my room," related Lincoln, "when he told me that he had been sent, at the instance of his father and General Scott, to inform me that their

<sup>17</sup> Between Camden, Howard, Lee, and Eutaw Streets.

<sup>18</sup> B. J. Lossing, "The Pictorial Field Book of the Civil War"; vol. i, pp. 279-280. Lincoln gave the account verbally to Lossing at the White House in December 1864, and it is "substantially in his own words."

detectives in Baltimore had discovered a plot there to assassinate me. *They knew nothing of Mr. Pinkerton's movements.* I now believed such a plot to be in existence."

Lincoln's brief speech at the morrow's ceremony held in its ending an allusion to all this. Often, he said, he had asked himself what it was that from the first had kept the young Confederation together. He had found the answer in "that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but, I hope, to the world for all future time. [Great applause.] It was that which gave promise that in due time the weight would be lifted from the shoulders of all men." He continued:

Now, my friends, can this country be saved upon that basis? If it can, I will consider myself one of the happiest men in the world—if I can help to save it. . . . But if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I was about to say I would rather be assassinated on this spot than surrender it. [Applause.]

The audience filling Chestnut Street clapped hands but could not know what prompted such expression. Thenceforward, with other visions that crossed the brooding soul of Abraham Lincoln, rose at times the vision of sudden death.

At nine-thirty he left for Harrisburg. On the way, Judd unfolded to him alone the plan determined on, adding that as a matter of courtesy the other members of the party should later be conferred with in so serious a case. Lincoln said, "I reckon they'll laugh at us, Judd." Harrisburg was reached at two, and Lincoln spoke from the balcony of the Jones House to a crowd of five thousand. (Next day's New York *Herald* remarked, "No terms are too severe to characterize the conduct of the crowd about the hotel and the arrangements there.") Then he addressed the legislature, and a reception was held at the state house, and after the reception a conclave went into session at the hotel.

Judd stated the matter and lively argument ensued. Judge Davis, a jurist of parts (he was later an associate justice of the Supreme Court), after putting some sharp queries to Judd, turned to Lincoln and asked, "Well, Mr. Lincoln, what is your judgment?"

Lincoln said, "The appearance of Mr. Frederick Seward, with



warning from another source, confirms my belief in Mr. Pinkerton's statement. . . . I am disposed to carry out Judd's plan." He was "very calm, and neither in his conversation or manner exhibited alarm or fear."

"It is against *my* judgment," interjected Colonel Sumner, "but I have undertaken to go to Washington with Mr. Lincoln and I shall do it." The group adjourned to dinner.<sup>19</sup>

At about six o'clock Lincoln was called from the dining table. He went to his room and presently came down wearing an overcoat into a pocket of which he had stuck a soft felt hat. The hat had been given to him in New York and for night travel would certainly be more comfortable than would a tall, inflexible beaver. Over one arm he carried a shawl such as he had worn in Springfield when he went to market of a winter's morning, basket in hand; such as then and afterward was frequently worn by men in cold or wet. Preceded by the burly Lamon, he walked arm-in-arm with Governor Curtin out of a side entrance and entered a waiting carriage. Close behind was Colonel Sumner, and Judd tapped him on the shoulder. Sumner turned—and away went the carriage down Second Street as if to the Governor's mansion, on the north side of Second just south of Chestnut. The Colonel was furious, but it had been thought best that Lamon should be Lincoln's only escort.

Past the Governor's mansion the carriage moved on to where the Pennsylvania Central crossed Second Street. There in the dusk an engine with one car stood ready, but the oil-lamps in the car were not lighted. Immediately the signal was given for the run to West Philadelphia. The passengers, besides Lincoln and Lamon, were Enoch Lewis, the road's general superintendent; G. C. Francis, division superintendent; T. E. Garrett, general baggage agent; and John Pitcairn, Jr., telegraph operator, who had with him an instrument, so that he could tap the wires if that should be necessary.

They rode in darkness with no stop except at Downingtown for

<sup>19</sup> Judd's letter to Pinkerton from Chicago, Nov. 3, 1867. This may be read in the brochure "History and Evidence," issued by the Pinkerton Agency for complimentary distribution; or in the Rev. Arthur Edwards' "Sketch of the Life of Norman B. Judd"; pp. 11-17.



the engine to take on water. Telegraph wires along the line of the Northern Central between Harrisburg and Baltimore had been grounded, so that no message could pass over them; and H. E. Thayer, local manager of the American Telegraph Company, was on duty all night at Philadelphia, to see that no dispatches passed to Baltimore that way.

The sleeping car was already an American institution. Berths had been reserved for Mrs. Warne of the Pinkerton Agency at the rear of the "sleeper" attached to the Baltimore train leaving Philadelphia at ten-fifty. She had explained that an invalid brother would be with her, and a curtain was therefore hung across that end of the car and permission given to enter by the rear door. Conductor Litzenberg had orders to hold the train until Superintendent Kenney personally handed him an important parcel that President Felton was sending to E. J. Allen at Willard's in Washington.

At West Philadelphia, Kenney and Pinkerton met Lamon and Lincoln, and the four were driven across the city to the depot of the Philadelphia, Washington and Baltimore. Kenney handed the package to the conductor, who at once started his train—only five minutes behind time. Litzenberg was blissfully ignorant that the package was made up of old newspapers, that E. J. Allen was Allan Pinkerton, and that the ten-fifty bore Abraham Lincoln one stage farther upon his extraordinary journey. Lincoln forthwith turned in and the miles were covered without incident. At Baltimore the car was drawn by horses from the President Street station along Pratt Street and down Howard to the Camden station of the Baltimore and Ohio.<sup>20</sup> The town seemed peaceable enough save for an inebriate roaring a stanza of "Dixie." "Quietly and rather sadly" Lincoln spoke from his berth: "No doubt there will be a great time in Dixie by and by."

The rail trip from Baltimore to Washington took in those days not less than an hour and a half. The Washington branch, completed in 1835, left the main line at the Relay House. Its stone viaduct over the Patapsco was justly considered a fine work of engineering. At about six on the morning of February 23rd, Lincoln

<sup>20</sup> The P., W. & B. station was at the corner of President Street and Canton Avenue.

and his companions stepped down to the platform of the superfluously ugly old station on New Jersey Avenue at North C Street, not far from the Capitol. Lincoln was wearing his felt hat and had the shawl over his shoulders. We must remember that he was not yet imaged in the popular consciousness. With his informal headgear and a nascent and disfiguring beard, he might well have been unrecognized by strangers, but those at all familiar with his appearance could hardly have mistaken him.

Suddenly a voice—part Maine, part Illinois—was heard to say, "You can't come that on me, Abe!" It was the voice of his friend Representative Elihu Washburne of Galena. Frederick Seward had telegraphed from Philadelphia "a word previously agreed upon," and Secretary Seward was on hand with a carriage. The Secretary wrote home that day:

The President-elect arrived *incog.* at six this morning. I met him at the depot; and after breakfast introduced him to the President and Cabinet, and then I proceeded with him to call on General Scott. . . . He is very cordial and kind toward me—simple, natural and agreeable.

Thousands of Washingtonians had decided that, weather favoring, they would witness Lincoln's entry on Saturday afternoon. But long before noon it was noised about that already he was at Willard's, and gradually this became certain.

At the Peace Convention in Willard's Hall that day, L. E. Chittenden (afterward Register of the Treasury) sat, he said, between Waldo Johnson of Missouri and James A. Seddon (later Confederate Secretary of War). Johnson's Negro attendant brought a scrap of paper on which Chittenden could not help reading:

Lincoln is in this hotel!

Johnson exclaimed, "How the devil did he get through Baltimore?" Seddon growled back, "What would prevent his passing through Baltimore?" <sup>21</sup>

Hearsay was that before the Peace Convention broke up, Lincoln's presence had for some reason been desired; or that government officials had telegraphed Lincoln to shift his time of arrival because the Republican Club of Baltimore had purposed a demon-

<sup>21</sup> "Recollections of President Lincoln"; pp. 65-66.

stration in his honor, their political opponents had determined to prevent it, and trouble seemed likely. "Our own solution," volunteered the *National Intelligencer*, "is that under all the circumstances . . . he deemed it would be best to avoid all chances of turmoil, and at the same time to be relieved of all further demonstrations, of which his journey had already been amply full." <sup>22</sup>

Another version was that a political group in Baltimore had arranged to escort Lincoln in procession and had applied to Marshal George P. Kane for police protection. Kane had objected, but without success, that a brawl might occur and indignities be offered the President-elect. He had thought, too, that the citizens of Baltimore would be placed in a false light, inasmuch as they did not sympathize with Mr. Lincoln's political views. Thereupon, gentlemen "who had the good name of Baltimore chiefly at heart" begged Lincoln by telegraph not to tarry within their borders.<sup>23</sup>

Over the country had spread a special dispatch filed at Harrisburg at eight in the morning of Saturday the 23rd by the *New York Times*' correspondent, Joseph Howard, Jr. Reprinted, either wholly or in part, by many other newspapers, it was so widely digested by the man-in-the-street as to establish a legend. It pictured the infuriated Colonel Sumner as "weeping with indignation"; stated that Lincoln had left at *nine* o'clock of the preceding evening, attended by "Superintendent Lewis and one friend"; and included the historic sentence: "He wore a Scotch plaid cap and a very long military cloak, so that he was entirely unrecognizable." <sup>24</sup>

This was an irresistible morsel for the cartoonists, who thereafter were to be amusedly busy with

His length of shambling limb, his furrow'd face.

There were gibes about the "great shirt-tail plot." Bennett's *Herald* <sup>25</sup> chuckled, "The 'Scotch cap,' we dare say, was furnished by Gen. [Simon] Cameron, from his relics of the Highland clan of his ancestors, and the military cloak was probably furnished by

<sup>22</sup> Feb. 25, 1861; p. 3.—The delegates to the Convention called upon him in a body on the night of the 23rd. The Convention adjourned on the 27th.

<sup>23</sup> *New York Times*, Feb. 25; p. 1 (Washington correspondence).

<sup>24</sup> *Times*, Feb. 25; p. 1. First printed in an extra edition on the 23rd.

<sup>25</sup> Feb. 24, 27.

Col. Sumner." It suggested that Old Abe "cut Washington altogether, and return to New York, where he can be inaugurated magnificently under the auspices of Barnum, either at his downtown establishment or at the Academy of Music—admittance twenty-five cents." . . . The *Daily News*<sup>26</sup> referred to "The Great Runaway" and "The Flight of Abraham," saying that in New York it was all regarded "as a joke of the largest dimensions." From Albany the *Atlas and Argus*<sup>27</sup> stormed: "This termination of his journey, by a flight under cover of darkness, disguised in old clothes, is inglorious and disgraceful." From Columbus the weekly *Crisis* sent its echo. So late as June 1864, in a speech at Hamilton, Ohio, the egregious Vallandigham, who had sneaked back from Canada to take part in the McClellan campaign, woke laughter and applause by boasting, ". . . I did not come here in a plaid cap or long military cloak."<sup>28</sup>

The Confederate agent Mrs. Rose Greenhow of Maryland regaled British readers with such pabulum as this:

Excited and absurd discussions and plans were made at Washington and other places as to the means by which he should reach the capital. Lincoln had, however, formed a plan of his own, and, having far more reticence than had been ascribed to him by his partisans, executed it whilst these discussions were going on, and suddenly appeared at Washington, at six o'clock, under the disguise of a "*Scotch cap and cloak*," announcing himself with characteristic phraseology in the apartments of his sleeping Committee of Safety at Willard's Hotel with—"Hillo! Just look at me! By jingo, my own dad wouldn't know me!"<sup>29</sup>

W. H. ("Bull Run") Russell, correspondent of the London *Times*, perplexedly jotted down: "People take particular pleasure in telling how he [Lincoln] came toward the seat of his Government disguised in a Scotch cap and cloak, whatever that may mean." Rejoicing after the first Bull Run, the Richmond *Daily Whig* expanded on the "Alarm at Washington." "Old Scott and Lin-

<sup>26</sup> Feb. 25, 26, 27.

<sup>27</sup> Feb. 25.

<sup>28</sup> "The War of the Rebellion" (Official Records), series II, vol. vii; p. 332.

<sup>29</sup> "My Imprisonment and the First Year of Abolition Rule at Washington" (London); p. 14.—Mrs. Greenhow hated Pinkerton and all his works—especially her own arrest; for it was through him she had been ordered to the Old Capitol prison.



coln," it noted, "were not visible, perhaps they were adjusting disguises to make good their escape."<sup>30</sup>

Some years later the New York *Times* confessed that "an officer entered the room of our correspondent at the hotel [in Harrisburg] and informed him of what had occurred, but would not permit him to leave the room until morning, by which time Mr. Lincoln had arrived in Washington."<sup>31</sup> No wonder a contemporary said of Howard, "Give him a hook and he will hang more yarn upon it than any man not closely related to Baron Munchausen."<sup>32</sup> One analyst declared:

This Scotch cap and cloak business is surely the most incongruous and sensational that newspaper readers were ever called upon to believe. It is unfortunate, perhaps, for the life of this well-imagined story that subsequent disclosures have tended to deprive it of that beauty and force which it might be supposed to derive from its historical truth.<sup>33</sup>

There was no "cloak," military or other. The felt hat may have had what is known in America as a "Scotch plaid" pattern, but it was not a Scotch bonnet of any sort.

Howard afterward concocted the notorious "bogus proclamation" over Lincoln's name, thus getting two New York papers into trouble and himself into Fort Lafayette. This proclamation called for 400,000 fresh volunteers, conveyed the impression that the Union cause was pretty generally in a bad way, and appointed May 26th as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. It was printed in the *World* and the *Journal of Commerce*. The price of gold went up (which presumably was the intention) and there was an incipient panic. In the Gay 'Nineties, features of the New York *Recorder* were "Howard's Letter" on Sundays and "Howard's Column" during the week. We catch a passing view of this journalistic lion in 1893 at the celebrated trial of Miss Lizzie Borden, where he was *primus inter pares*—the most conspicuous among gentlemen of the press.

<sup>30</sup> Aug. 6, 1861; p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Oct. 31, 1867; p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Daily News*, Feb. 26, 1861; p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> New York *Leader*, July 10, 1869; p. 3. (From an article by Kenward Philp in the *Brooklyn Monthly* for July.)



By those who affect to pooh-pooh the idea that Lincoln, had he gone through Baltimore as scheduled, might really have been in danger, the origin of that idea is attributed chiefly to a "vain-glorious detective"—in short, to Allan Pinkerton. In 1861 Pinkerton, a stocky Scot who had immigrated to Illinois, was the principal of Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, which he founded in 1850. This pioneer agency of his, with headquarters in Chicago, had done highly successful work for express companies and railways. George B. McClellan, president of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad, had employed Pinkerton and thought well of him. It was quite natural that with such a record he should be retained in an emergency by President Felton of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore.

Felton had reason to believe that the rougher element among Maryland's secessionists meant to destroy railway property and interfere with the service. As his road was an essential link between New York and Washington, he realized that, in the existing state of the nation, traffic ought not to be interrupted. He sent for Pinkerton, who established offices at Baltimore in a building on South Street. Operatives were on duty not only in Baltimore but at Havre de Grace, Magnolia, and Perrymansville (now Perryman). They were especially to search for plots to destroy not only railway bridges but also the large steamboat that ferried trains across the Susquehanna. On the basis of what he shortly learned, Pinkerton recommended that guards be stationed at the ferry and the various bridges. He and his men, he says, were sensible of an obstinate undercurrent of popular feeling against Lincoln; of a growing conviction that something ought to be done to prevent the inauguration.

On February 10th—the day before Lincoln bade farewell to Springfield—Pinkerton had from William Stearns, an official of Felton's line, the following "tip":

Yours of the 6th inst. received. I am informed that a son of a distinguished citizen of Maryland said that he had taken an oath with others to assassinate Mr. Lincoln before he gets to Washington, and they may attempt to do it while he is passing over our road. I think you had better look after this man if possible. The information is perfectly

reliable. I have nothing more to say at this time. I shall try to see you in a few days.

This confirmed vague hints that already had been brought to Pinkerton, and Felton authorized him to extend the scope of the inquiry.<sup>34</sup>

It was readily discovered, he says, that certain groups, ostensibly formed as military units and drilling as such, were actually political clubs. They were associated in a secret organization whose aim was not only to further general secessionist propaganda but also by Lincoln's assassination to hasten a division of the states. Two of Pinkerton's operatives—one at Baltimore and the other, Timothy Webster, at Perrymansville—were accepted as members in clubs of the kind and thus gained a knowledge of their personnel and designs. (Subsequently, while Pinkerton, as Major E. J. Allen, was head of McClellan's secret service in the Civil War, Tim Webster was his most trusted assistant.)<sup>35</sup>

By this time it had been announced that Lincoln would arrive in Baltimore *via* the Northern Central. One plan discussed was that there could be a feint, a pretense of disorder in the crowd that would surround the Calvert Street depot and fill the narrow streets adjoining. The attention of the police would apparently be diverted—conspirators would surge forward—Lincoln would be shot at close range. Only a small police squad would be detailed, and this would be in sympathy with the undertaking. Shielded by friends, the murderer would make for a vessel lying in the basin and so escape to a Southern port.

Nearly a quarter-century afterward, Pinkerton cast this whole story into popular form in the early chapters of his partly autobiographical volume "The Spy of the Rebellion." The greater portion of his records had meanwhile been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, and under all the circumstances we should hardly expect at every point in this narrative the severest accuracy; but numerous witnesses testified to its substantial truth.

To begin with, we have corroborative letters from Pinkerton's

<sup>34</sup> The text of the letter as given by Stearns himself is in "History and Evidence"; p. 24.

<sup>35</sup> See also W. G. Beymer, "On Hazardous Service"; pp. 259-287.

own files. Eleven of these letters were published by him in 1868, shortly after they were written. Not only Felton but such railwaymen as his subordinates William Stearns and Henry S. Kenney—both of whom were not unfamiliar with the Baltimore populace—avouch their belief that plans were indeed afoot for Lincoln's murder. We now know, also, that a person acquainted "with the structure of Southern society and with the working of its political machinery" had assured Felton of an extensive conspiracy to seize Washington and make impossible the prompt transportation of troops. "Mr. Lincoln's inauguration was thus to be prevented, or his life was to fall a sacrifice." Felton's informant was the distinguished humanitarian Dorothea Lynde Dix, known and esteemed in Maryland, as she was throughout the country, for her wise philanthropy.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, other detectives than Pinkerton's had likewise been busy. John A. Kennedy, superintendent of New York's metropolitan police, known to his admirers as "Uncle John" or "J. A. K." and derisively termed by a Baltimore scribe "the New York Vidocq," had in December 1860 sent two officers of his detective bureau to Washington, where trained men were not available, and in January 1861 he had taken a third officer. The three reported directly to Col. Charles P. Stone of Scott's staff, and he in turn to Scott. Colonel Stone later requested that Kennedy assign men to Baltimore. Kennedy already had placed two officers there on his own responsibility and now added another, David S. Bookstaver, who assumed to be a music agent while the first two mingled with the local roughs. These three men in Baltimore were also to report in person to Colonel Stone. On February 20th Bookstaver obtained information that caused him to take the next train to Washington.

In a memorandum dated February 21st, Stone wrote as follows:

A New York detective officer, who has been on duty in Baltimore for three weeks reports this morning that there is serious danger of violence to, and the assassination of, Mr. Lincoln in his passage through that city, should the time of that passage be known. He states that

<sup>36</sup> See also Felton's letter to Lossing ("Pictorial Field Book"; vol. iii, pp. 565-567), his statement in W. A. Schouler's "A History of Massachusetts in the Civil War"; vol. i, pp. 59-65, and his letter to Francis Tiffany in Tiffany's "Life" of Miss Dix, pp. 333-334.

there are banded rowdies holding secret meetings, and that he has heard threats of mobbing and violence, and has himself heard men declare that if Mr. Lincoln was to be assassinated they would like to be the men. . . . He deems the danger one which the authorities and people in Baltimore cannot guard against. All risk might be easily avoided by a change in the traveling arrangements which would bring Mr. Lincoln and a portion of his party through Baltimore by a night train without previous notice.<sup>37</sup>

About noon of the 21st, Frederick Seward was in the Senate gallery when word was sent up to him that his father, Senator Seward, wished to see him immediately. It appeared that Colonel Stone had just brought a note from Scott. To Frederick the Senator handed a letter addressed to Lincoln, enclosing both Scott's note and Stone's memorandum.

"Whether this story is well founded or not," he said, "Mr. Lincoln ought to know of it at once. But I know of no reason to doubt it. General Scott is impressed with the belief that the danger is real. Colonel Stone has facilities for knowing and is not apt to exaggerate. I want you to go by the first train. Find Mr. Lincoln wherever he is.

"Let no one else know your errand. I have written him that I think he should change his arrangements, and pass through Baltimore at a different hour. I know it may occasion some embarrassment, and perhaps some ill-natured talk. Nevertheless, I would strongly advise him to do it." "Public Man" confided to his diary: "I do not believe one word of the cock-and-bull story . . . which Mr. Seward told me to-day had been communicated to Mr. Lincoln as coming from General Scott." . . . He was, of course, utterly at fault in adding, ". . . It was clear to me that Mr. Seward himself did not believe one word of it."<sup>38</sup>

It was after ten that night when Frederick Seward was able to give Lincoln the letter with its enclosures. Lincoln sat down by a gas-lamp and thoughtfully read them all twice through before beginning to ask questions. Frederick said that personally he knew nothing as to how the information had been gained or who might be suspected.

"Did you," Lincoln queried, "hear any names mentioned? Did

<sup>37</sup> Nicolay and Hay; vol. iii, pp. 311-312 (from the MS.).

<sup>38</sup> *North American Review*, Sept. 1879; pp. 259-260.



you, for instance, ever hear anything said about such a name as Pinkerton?"

No, Frederick answered—the only names he had heard were those of Stone and Scott. After a moment, Lincoln continued:

"I may as well tell you why I ask. There were stories or rumors some time ago, before I left home, about people who were intending to do me a mischief. I never attached much importance to them—never wanted to believe any such thing. So I never would do anything about them, in the way of taking precautions and the like. Some of my friends, though, thought differently—Judd and others—and without my knowledge they employed a detective to look into the matter. It seems he has occasionally reported what he found, and only today, since we arrived at this house, he brought this story, or something similar to it, about an attempt on my life in the confusion and hurly-burly of the reception at Baltimore.

"That is exactly why I was asking you about names. If different persons, not knowing of each other's work, have been pursuing separate clues that led to the same result, why then it shows there may be something in it." . . .<sup>39</sup>

A letter from Kennedy to the historian Lossing was printed widely and in full in American newspapers. In quoting from this, Pinkerton mistakenly attributed to Kennedy the words, "I know nothing of any connection of Mr. Pinkerton with the matter." To which Pinkerton responded: "In this respect, Mr. Kennedy spoke the truth: he did not *know* of my connection with the passage of Mr. Lincoln, nor was it my intention that he should know of it." The words were, in fact, Stone's, and Kennedy had so given them; but it remains equally true that Kennedy at the time had known no more of Pinkerton than Pinkerton knew of Kennedy. Oddly enough, however, the two, each quite unaware of the other, were on opposite sides of that dividing curtain in the sleeping-car from Philadelphia to Washington.

Something has been made of the fact that in the "Life of Abraham Lincoln" which Chauncey F. Black ghost-wrote for Ward

<sup>39</sup> Lossing, "Pictorial Field Book"; vol. ii, pp. 147-149. *New York Times*, Oct. 31, 1867; p. 2. Nicolay and Hay; vol. iii, pp. 302-316. F. W. Seward, "Seward at Washington"; pp. 508-511, and "Recollections"; pp. 134-139. See also "Abraham Lincoln. Tributes from His Associates"; pp. 60-65.



Lamon, Lamon after ten years of implicit belief professed to have decided that there had been not only no conspiracy but “no definite purpose in the heart of even one man to murder Mr. Lincoln at Baltimore.” Just how this could be “perfectly manifest” is, however, nowhere explained. Instead, several pages are devoted to ineffectual ridicule of Pinkerton and his operatives. At the same time, with a curious inconsistency, the book does seek to involve Representative Webster of Maryland and Governor Hicks in a supposititious scheme to “kill Lincoln”; and to that end introduces a letter ascribed to Hicks but of more than doubtful authenticity. Lamon paid Herndon for the use of some of Herndon’s papers. The book quotes at length from a confidential report of a Pinkerton agent, and states that the original was one of a number lent to Herndon by Pinkerton. Though this is possible, the isolated report does nothing to promote Lamon’s argument. Herndon apparently did not share the views of the Lamon “Life.” Isaac N. Arnold also examined the daily reports of Pinkerton’s men and held a quite different opinion.<sup>40</sup> From Lamon’s later and matured “Recollections of Abraham Lincoln” these ideas were entirely deleted; and replacing them we have:

Neither he [Lincoln] nor the country generally then understood the true facts concerning the dangers to his life. It is now an acknowledged fact that *there never was a moment from the day he crossed the Maryland line, up to the time of his assassination, that he was not in danger of death by violence. . . .*

It is known that, when leaving Harrisburg, Lamon was a veritable walking arsenal. Possibly his defensive equipment—which is said to have included brass knuckles and a sling-shot—supplied material for the *Daily News*’ irresponsible charge that “nearly every member of the President’s suite was armed to the teeth with instruments much in use at the South and West, and commonly to be found in the breast pockets of gamblers and gentlemen of sportive associations and pursuits.” After Lincoln had made him marshal of the District of Columbia and he had set up as something of a detective in his own right, Lamon may for a space have resented the notion that his sole presence had not been Lincoln’s sufficient protection.

<sup>40</sup> See *Harper’s Magazine*, June 1868; p. 123.

If he had entered Baltimore by day, would Lincoln have been murdered? The New York *Tribune* said editorially that it had been credibly informed that for several days stocks were sold in Wall Street by persons having "inside" information that he would be killed before reaching Washington.<sup>41</sup> Denied their advantages, we shall, of course, never know. Even Pinkerton, as he told Lincoln, would not venture to be certain about it. Was there real danger, or was this, as some apparently would imply, an elaborate hoax contrived by ingenious Baltimoreans? Suppose we look over the ground.

In American cities that was a rowdy, gun-toting age. Cincinnati, Boston, New York were among those that had known their mobs. At Cincinnati, Birney's presses were repeatedly smashed, and the authorities notified Birney that they had no force adequate to protect him. In Boston, "gentlemen of property and standing" dragged Garrison through the streets at a rope's end. In New York, twenty-two persons were killed in the Astor Place riot; the "Rynders mob" (so called from Isaiah Rynders, the United States marshal who abetted it) drove Wendell Phillips from the Broadway Tabernacle; the Seventh Regiment was ordered out when Mayor Wood and the old municipal police resisted the introduction of the metropolitan system. But in the general mind, over a term of years, a kind of evil pre-eminence had perhaps been awarded to Baltimore.

Baltimore, having then a population of about 200,000, was a town of charming red-brick Georgian houses with marble steps—the home of the renowned clipper ship—a place of wealth, fashion, well-kept shops, comfortable hotels distinguished for their *cuisine*—a center of heroic legends and genuine culture. It was also a town of cesspools, polluted water, and riots. Rioting had been since 1812 a common diversion there.

Relatively minor affairs were that of 1835 and the B. & O. fray of 1857. In 1856 and 1859 there were tremendous election *mêlées* in which firearms, knives, and clubs were freely wielded. Know-Nothings and Democrats, "Rip-Raps" and "Reformers"—all packed weapons. Even the cobbler's awl became keenly though unobtrusively active. Governor Ligon complained to the legisla-

<sup>41</sup> Feb. 25; p. 4.

ture of "a new element in the political controversies of the times, which, in my opinion, has been productive of more baneful consequences . . . than anything which has occurred since the organization of our government—I mean the formation and encouragement of secret political societies."

The Maryland council of the Know-Nothings, stronger than any other, had retained its power longer. Throughout Baltimore, Know-Nothing clubs and lodges were active, often with names more fitting for Sicilian *banditti*—names like Blood-Tubs, Plug-Uglies, Black Snakes, Red Necks. The Constitutional Union party, which held its convention in Baltimore in May 1860, was made up in part of Know-Nothing odds-and-ends. (It may be noted that all three candidates opposed to Lincoln were nominated at conventions in Baltimore.) Irrespective of politics, unemployed men abounded, and barroom champions ready for brawls. The volunteer firemen were a pugnacious lot and hailed a fracas. Jacob Frey, himself once a marshal of Baltimore's police, speaks in his "Reminiscences" (p. 98) of the "horrible atrocities" of the election riots. "The Sunpapers of Baltimore" (a symposium by Gerald W. Johnson and others) refers (p. 59) to the "many casualties" and to the "human flotsam" of the town's "turbulent days."

Buchanan, when traveling from Lancaster to Washington for his inaugural in 1857, had a taste of Baltimore's quality. With niece Harriet Lane and nephew James B. Hardy, and escorted by the Lancaster Fencibles, he was taken in procession from the Bolton depot of the Northern Central <sup>42</sup> to the City Hotel. For nearly an hour roughs hooted and hissed him, stoned his carriage, and pelted with brickbats his guard of honor. Declining the proffered dinner, he did not linger. In consequence the New York *Tribune* proposed "the construction of an air-line railway post-route from the North to Washington City, which shall avoid Baltimore." <sup>43</sup> In the evening after Buchanan's inauguration a party of Baltimorean visitors in Washington gathered at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Sixth Street (where the National Hotel was) and fired revolvers, terrifying the citizenry.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Above the Calvert Street station.

<sup>43</sup> Mar. 11, 1857; p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> New York *Times*, Mar. 5, 1857; p. 1.



Some thought that Baltimore ought to choose public officials who would resist and punish wholesale lawlessness; but apparently more thought otherwise. The disorderly element became thoroughly accustomed to disorder. The merchants and jobbers, most of whose trade was with the South, were, it may be, preoccupied with dreams of the day when their city would be the rich metropolis of a new nation. When Washington's Mayor Berret sounded Baltimore's Marshal Kane as to possible indignities—if nothing worse—in store for Lincoln, the Marshal, locally a great favorite, replied complacently that the "insult offered to President Buchanan" was, as everybody knew, "the act of two or three members of one of the fanatical clubs of his political opponents which at that time infested our city, but which have long since been numbered among the things that were."

Although its better newspapers expressed a pious wish to free the Monument City from this lax condition, their methods cannot be deemed unqualifiedly happy. On the morning of February 23rd, 1861, the *American* sounded this note:

Mr. Lincoln passes through our city to-day. As the representative of political and sectional views which can find but few adherents among our people and no sympathy from the masses, the President-elect will miss here the popular ovations that have attended every step of his progress from Springfield up to the borders of Maryland.

It was true enough: there had been no greeting from the state, no resolutions from its legislature, no invitation from the governor, no committee from the municipality. The *American* felt called upon publicly to justify Mayor Brown for even having consented to ride with Mr. Lincoln.

The *Sun* of the same date, though admitting that Buchanan had been "exposed to insult from the ruffian ascendancy of the time," argued that this was "a disgrace, not to our city, but to the forms of authority which bad men had usurped." Now, it said, "we live under a lawful government"—to wit, that of the Breckinridge Democracy—"and enjoy again the blessings of civilization." It supposed that Lincoln, partly because of the "somewhat eccentric style" of him—he had been plebeianly grasping "many a dingy paw from the 'great unwashed' "—would be "an object of curiosity

to thousands . . . who, having nothing better to do in this 'artificial crisis,' will avail themselves of a free ticket to have a look at him." As for the *Exchange*, it hoped, so far as Lincoln was concerned, "that no opportunity may be afforded him—or that, if it be afforded, he will not embrace it—to repeat in our midst the sentiments which he is reported to have expressed yesterday in Philadelphia." The overtone of menace here is hardly to be mistaken.

It has often been said that next day the remainder of the Lincoln party went through Baltimore without so much as a ripple. This is unqualifiedly and absurdly false.

Long before the "special" from Harrisburg was due, an ill-tempered crowd of some 15,000 was massed about the Calvert Street station, extending along Calvert to the Battle Monument and up the slope of Franklin Street as far as Courtland. At the approach of the train there was a wild onset. "The most terrific shouts and yells were sent up," chronicled the *Republican*, "excelling anything in the way of excitement we have ever witnessed." The mob overran the station and swarmed onto the platforms of the cars. Marshal Kane's policemen seem not to have been much in evidence during the proceedings.

"Come out, Old Abe!" shouted a medley of voices. "Let's have him out!"

Faces peered in at the windows. Groans and catcalls increased at the appearance of the committee of the Republican Association that had gone to Pennsylvania to extend solitary courtesies. Two of the committee had their hats bashed over their eyes. Carriages finally took Mrs. Lincoln and the young Lincolns to the home of John S. Gittings, president of the Northern Central, on Mt. Vernon Square. For at least a half-hour the disappointed and vindictive mob swayed this way and that, "uttering every imaginable description of noise." After dinner, the Lincolns were fairly smuggled aboard cars held for the party at Camden station.

They were soon beyond the limits of Baltimore, and from the moderates in that city rose a sigh of relief. Though the *Sun* might protest that the conspiracy story was an "infamous lie" and assail



Governor Hicks for his testimony before the Select Committee of Five, the *American* acknowledged the possibility of considerable excitement and "unpleasant" demonstrations. It was pointed out that Mr. Lincoln had, after all, avoided what *might* have been an unfortunate occasion. To the brethren in New Orleans the Baltimore correspondent of the *Picayune* confided:

We are very well satisfied that Mr. Lincoln assumed the responsibility of giving us the slip. . . . It is altogether possible some of his Republican friends in our city, had they appeared conspicuously in any parade or procession, might have been roughly handled, and had an affray commenced in this way, *with an ungovernable populace of thousands assembled together, none can foretell the consequences.*<sup>45</sup>

Less than two months had gone by when events made their own definitive comment on the *Sun's* unsmiling claim of February 26th that "there is not, perhaps, in the world, a better governed and more orderly city." Marching on April 18th from the Bolton depot to the Camden station, five companies of Pennsylvania troops, with thirty-four muskets among them and no ammunition, were set upon by a mob of 10,000 with stones, brickbats, and bottles. This was only practice for the following day. On the 19th the Sixth Massachusetts regiment arrived at the President Street station. A portion of the regiment was hauled along Pratt Street in the usual way, just as Lincoln and his companions had been on the morning of February 23rd. The increasing mob thereupon tore up pavement and threw heaps of the cobblestones on the track. The remaining troops attempted to march toward Camden station and cobbles began to fly. At the corner of Pratt and Commerce Streets a perfect fusillade of them was poured into the soldiery, who at last opened fire. Thus was shed what James Randall in his "Maryland, My Maryland!" saluted as

the patriotic gore  
That flecked the streets of Baltimore—

but Randall neglected to mention that blood was shed and lives were given by Massachusetts men bound peaceably to their duty. After a while Marshal Kane showed up and enjoined the mob to

<sup>45</sup> Mar. 7, 1861. The italics are the present writer's.

obey the laws. We may repeat the apposite question originally framed by Isaac N. Arnold:

Would a mob that attacked a regiment of armed men have been deterred from attacking one man, whom they regarded as a tyrant and the chief object of their hatred? <sup>46</sup>

Thus were ushered in the "three glorious days"—days when Maryland Guards and City Guards, led by Isaac R. Trimble and by Marshal Kane himself, with his policemen to help, burned bridges along the northward railway lines; when the police seized four carloads of military stores at the President Street depot and took them to 38 and 40 Holliday Street, right opposite Marshal Kane's office; when somehow small arms in large quantities came suddenly from concealment (a Colonel Denson, for instance, supplying from his warehouse 900 muskets); when the ladies blossomed forth with rosettes and even dolls wore Confederate colors.

Kane had assured Samuel Felton that all the talk of burning bridges was so much nonsense. He was the identical Kane who had also politely informed Mayor Berret of Washington that Baltimore folk believed the bad old days of mobs and riots were at an end, and that the President-elect needed no armed escort while passing through Baltimore or sojourning in it. When later the city was placed under martial law, he refused to surrender arms in the possession of the city authorities and was imprisoned on charges of protecting contraband traffic in arms and being head of a force hostile to the United States government. On his release he took refuge within the Confederate lines, and he remained there until the close of the war. Superintendent Kennedy from personal knowledge had no faith in him and early in January had cautioned friends of the Union to beware of him.<sup>47</sup> Small wonder that Pinkerton in February distrusted a police force commanded by Kane—a force that even with the best of intentions would have been unable to cope with things as they were.

Several Northern businessmen were told to leave the city. ". . . A manufacture of hemp" was shown to them, said a local

<sup>46</sup> *Harper's Magazine*, June 1868; p. 126.

<sup>47</sup> Kane told Kennedy that when Virginia seceded by a convention, Maryland would secede "by gravitation."

paper, and they were assured that if they were found in Baltimore after a specified time, one end of the rope would be applied to their necks and the other to a lamppost. "Acting upon this hint, several Union-shriekers have mysteriously disappeared." . . .<sup>48</sup> This was in the spirit of Charleston, where on April 12th the well-known portrait painter G. P. A. Healy, who had been finishing a portrait of Beauregard, was told by his friends the Frazers that he must leave their house as there was talk of tarring and feathering the "damn' Yankee." Mayor Allberger of Buffalo, arriving in New York from a trip to Baltimore, said that at the Eutaw House he had been surrounded and threatened by drunken ruffians and that every shop in Baltimore had been emptied of arms by the mob.<sup>49</sup>

It is nothing to the point that some details of the conspiracy story may today take on a fantastic quality. That is equally true of the original Ku Klux, the Molly Maguires, the I. W. W. Nativist societies like the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner or the Order of United Americans had their grotesque features. So did the Knights of the Golden Circle and their successors. So, for that matter, did the Know-Nothings, who for years influenced the course of Baltimore's life.

Nor may Cipriano Ferrandini, whom Pinkerton described as among the conspirators, be brushed aside (as he was by Lamon and others) merely because he happened to be a barber—as if Figaro were not a designing rogue. Lieutenant Smith, Lew Wallace's chief of detectives, found a Confederate recruiting-office in Baltimore in so prosaic and improbable a spot as Christian Emerich's shoe shop on South Gay Street. Ferrandini was, to be sure, listed in the Baltimore directory as "hair-dresser, Calvert, under Barnum's hotel." But the directory naturally did not add that he had been a captain of infantry in Juarez' army in Mexico, that he had commanded the Lafayette Guards in Baltimore, that the Select Committee of Five had called him before it. He was at that time drilling the Constitutional Guards at the headquarters of the National Volunteers—the Volunteers being, he said, a former political association that had donned military trimmings. He thought

<sup>48</sup> *The South*, Apr. 23; p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Evening Day-Book*, Apr. 22; p. 3. Healy, "Reminiscences of a Portrait Painter"; p. 68.

that if Northern militia tried to go through Baltimore, something would happen; and after it did happen, he was elected captain of the Winans Guard, attached to the Fifth regiment, Maryland Volunteer Infantry.<sup>50</sup>

To most persons, assassination for political reasons was then in the United States an incredible business. Henry Sanford, who, as representative of the American Telegraph Company, had been at the Continental Hotel that night of February 21st, said that in those days Americans generally thought such a thing impossible. "I went South," he said, "immediately after this occurrence . . . and good men . . . did not credit the story that there was to be any attempt to assassinate Mr. Lincoln at Baltimore. . . . I am happy to put on record my belief that the public authorities, and the public men, in the Confederacy at that time would never have countenanced it." . . . That such a plot was hatched, however, he had not for a moment doubted since the day when first he heard of it from Allan Pinkerton.<sup>51</sup>

Pinkerton had worked on this job *con amore*. He had always been a keen Abolitionist, and the "underground railway" was a road he had served without pay. He considered John Brown "a greater man than Napoleon ever dared to be, and as great a man as Washington." In spite of his known anti-slavery principles, his ability was such that in Pierce's time Secretary James Guthrie had retained him as a detective for the Treasury Department. There could scarcely have been vainglory for him in this matter of Lincoln's night trip, his part in which was unknown to the public until some years after the war. The military secret service post he held in 1861-1862 he owed not to Lincoln or Lincoln's friends but to McClellan. He left it when Burnside took command of the Army of the Potomac. After that he was for a time occupied in running down fraudulent claims against the United States government.

Judicious minds saw quickly the prudence of Lincoln's action. Realizing his importance to the country, they knew that, had he

<sup>50</sup> Report of the Committee; also *The South*, Apr. 24, 1861; p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> From the original letter to Robert Pinkerton (New York, May 17, 1892) in the Pinkerton files. Sanford was then president of the Adams Express Company.



risked his life in the face of threatened peril, he would have been blamed as foolhardy by many of the same persons who now stigmatized him as cowardly. Nevertheless, the general effect had been one of anti-climax. Republicans were mortified and chagrined. It had been, they felt, an inauspicious beginning, certain to be misjudged by North and South alike. Northern Democrats sneered, as Judd had been sure they would. Stanton, Buchanan's Attorney-General, said Lincoln was a "low, cunning clown" and had "crept into Washington."<sup>52</sup>

Upon Lincoln himself the occurrence left its unequivocal mark. According to Lamon, Lincoln once said to him, ". . . The way we skulked into this city, in the first place, has been a source of shame and regret to me, for it did look so cowardly."<sup>53</sup> Colonel McClure wrote: "I have several times heard Lincoln refer to this journey, and always with regret. Indeed, he seemed to regard it as one of the grave mistakes in his public career."<sup>54</sup> "Threats that he never should be inaugurated had been," admits James G. Blaine, "numerous and serious." Yet to his life's end, Blaine says, "he regretted that he had not, according to his own desire, gone through Baltimore in open day." . . .<sup>55</sup>

Thus was intensified in him the strain of fatalism that was his by nature. Later or sooner, if they wished to kill him, they would—and for their pains get Vice-President Hannibal Hamlin as president. If he could manage to slip away, he would ride alone into the country to the Soldiers' Home, even though a rifle shot startled his horse, which "unceremoniously separated me from my eight-dollar plug-hat." At Fort Stevens he would calmly make himself a target for sharpshooters until young Captain Holmes with blazing indiscretion called, "Get down, you fool!" He would, if he liked, saunter to a White House gate to look for a newsboy, or at night go unattended along the dim path to the old War Department. Death, a necessary end, would come when it would come; but never again should anybody have ground for saying he was afraid.

<sup>52</sup> *North American Review*, Sept. 1879; pp. 261-262.

<sup>53</sup> "Recollections"; p. 266.

<sup>54</sup> "Our Presidents"; p. 48.

<sup>55</sup> "Twenty Years of Congress"; vol. i, p. 280.



Baltimore was placed securely under martial law. Burned bridges were rebuilt, railway service was resumed, mails went forward, troop trains met scowls but no active interference. Outwardly there was change; but always, beneath the surface (as the provost marshal-general would have told you), smoldered disaffection. Between Baltimore and Richmond was constant interchange of news. Traffic in contraband of war (some of it originating in Philadelphia but having outlet through Baltimore) was unceasing by both water and land. From Baltimore went, in amazing quantities, medical and other supplies for the Confederate armies. To Baltimore large amounts of Virginia tobacco were run through the blockade. The Confederate raider Col. Harry Gilmor (who plundered in Carroll and Frederick Counties) and most of his command were Baltimoreans; and vessels clearing under sundry pretexts landed recruits on the Virginia shore.

When Gen. Lew Wallace in March 1864 assumed command of the Middle Department, his predecessor, General Schenck, apprised him:

Your trouble will have its origin in Baltimore. Baltimore viewed socially is peculiar. There is more culture to the square block there than there is in Boston; actual culture. The question of the war divided the old families, but I was never able to discover the dividing line. Did I put a heavy hand on one of the Secessionists, a delegation of influential Unionists at once hurried to the President and begged the culprit off. The most unfortunate thing in connection with the Department and its management is that it is only a pleasant morning's jaunt by rail from Baltimore to Washington. . . .

So near was Baltimore that, although he had passed through it and lived, its shadow still fell athwart Abraham Lincoln. Idle young Baltimoreans of Confederate sympathies, with convivial tastes and sometimes with empty pockets—ripe for frolic or for gaudy scheme—were often in the capital, where so much was to be heard and seen. Paroled Confederates found homes in Baltimore's rooming-houses. To and fro between Washington and Baltimore, or through Washington between Baltimore and Richmond, drifted Confederate runners, mail carriers, agents, and spies. From the second-floor windows of the Executive Mansion, Lincoln

looked daily toward the heights across the Potomac. Beyond them was the enemy in the field. But on the Potomac's hither side, about his feet and at his back, were other enemies. He was a stranger in a strange land,

Remembering the prairies and the corn.

## Three . THE SAFEGUARDING OF LINCOLN

DRIVEN down the wide blankness of Pennsylvania Avenue, with its fringe of ailanthus trees in whitewashed wooden boxes, Lincoln was delivered at the unadorned six-storied pile of Willard's ("Water and gas in each room"). When he had served a term as representative, back in Polk's administration, he had lodged in a boarding-house on the Hill. It was then that he breakfasted with Webster, opposed the Mexican War, introduced his bill for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. The city had been slowly growing since then but was little improved.

Despite a most liberal provision of cuspidors, the marbles of the Capitol were freckled with tobacco juice. Cheek by jowl with the dingy home of the State Department stood the Presidential stables. The City Hall, architecturally pleasing, was known as "the Washington Slave-Pen"; for within sat three commissioners issuing orders to a United States marshal and a corps of deputies whose chief business was the catching of runaway slaves at \$50 a head. While the physicist Henry, the hydrographer Maury, and the archivist Force lent to the town the distinction of their unselfish labors, spoilsmen wrangled like hawks over patronage.

"Society" there was, to be sure—the society of Mrs. Clay-Clopton's nostalgic reminiscences, "A Belle of the Fifties." Her first husband was Senator Clement C. Clay of Alabama, and she always looked back regretfully to that proud era when a lady simply had to have a pier glass for the right adjustment of hoop-skirts. Her coterie, largely Southern in tone, agreed heartily that a week of Washington was better than a year of New York. During sessions of Congress a continual exchange of hospitalities pre-

vailed. Carriages steered their uncertain courses through hazardous streets to receptions, balls, and elaborate dinners whose commonplaces were terrapin, reed birds, and canvasbacks. At its best this society had often an easy unaffectedness quite disarming; but the same society had approved the *code duello*, condoned gross drunkenness, and sanctioned brutality. No doubt incursions from Baltimore brought undesirables "with actual revolvers and unquestionable slung-shot." But side by side with its liveried retinues, its imported elegances, its superficial chivalry, life in Washington City itself had an endemic strain of barbarism that, as one editor put it, would not have been out of place in the camp of Alaric or of Attila.

To Mrs. Clay-Clopton's inner set belonged Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina. On May 22nd, 1856, while Charles Sumner was working at his desk in the Senate chamber, Brooks had approached him unannounced and repeatedly struck him across head and shoulders with a heavy cane. Sumner, unable to defend himself and wrenching the desk loose from the floor in his efforts to rise, was so injured that he did not return to the Senate until 1860. Laurence M. Keitt, another representative from South Carolina, rushed down the aisle and with curses warned onlookers to "let them alone." Spinal trouble delayed Sumner's recovery. Though terming this dastardly assault "a personal affair"—he had been provoked, he explained, by Sumner's "Crime against Kansas" speech—Brooks chose to make public vaunt of it before the House in what must be one of the worst apologies on record. "I went to work very deliberately," he declared with relish. Bob Toombs of Georgia, an approving witness, said of the blows: "They were hard licks and very effective."

Henry Wilson, Sumner's colleague, unsparingly denounced Brooks, and Brooks sent Wilson a challenge. Wilson, saying that dueling was both illegal and uncivilized, refused to meet him. Brooks, having resigned from the House, was almost unanimously re-elected. It was credibly reported that, at Charleston, Louis Wigfall of Texas "in the plenitude of his exaltation alluded to the assault on Senator Sumner as a type of the manner in which Southerners would deal with the Northerners generally."

This was not Washington's first casualty of the kind. A few





*From the Oldroyd Collection, Lincoln Museum, Washington*

LINCOLN "IN DISGUISE" IS PICTURED BY CARTOONISTS OF THE  
DAY

At the left he is shown in feminine attire; at the right, in plaid and Scotch  
bonnet



months before, Albert C. Rust, Democratic representative from Arkansas and powerful six-footer, had twice attacked Horace Greeley on the street. He objected to something Greeley had said in the *Tribune* about a motion of Rust's in the House. In the first instance he rained blows with his fists upon the Pickwickian head of the unwary editor, whose hands happened at the moment to be thrust deeply into the pockets of his celebrated overcoat. In the second, near the National Hotel, the Arkansan aimed at Horace a violent stroke with a walking stick. Surprisingly, Greeley's upraised arm was not shattered but the stick was broken. Rust was led away by friends. Greeley spent a day or two in bed.<sup>1</sup>

Rowdyism in Washington could thus at least plead legislative precedent. The pro-slavery mood was sultry and unrestrained. At breakfast in the bare, uncarpeted dining-hall of Willard's, that morning of Lincoln's arrival, there was probably table talk about the attack on Representative Charles H. Van Wyck, which had become known just the day preceding. Lincoln breakfasted in private, but he must later have learned the facts. About midnight of February 21st, Van Wyck, who was from the Tenth District of New York and stanchly anti-slavery, was passing the north wing of the Capitol when three men set upon him. His left hand was gashed by a knife and he was knocked down, but he succeeded in getting free. His assailants were unknown. Through unfriendly New York, where eyes were cool and cheers were sparse; through Baltimore, where the mob's will was frankly hostile, Lincoln had come to his astonishing capital. Living, he was never to be out of it for long.

For Inaugural Day a bright sun shone. A brisk March wind filled the air with Washington dust that lately had been Washington mud. Past, for the time being, was the dread of some more or less organized undertaking, some *coup de main*, to seize the city. Seward thought the truth was that although Washington was not prepared for defense, neither was the South as yet prepared for concerted aggression or willing to take the risk. But there remained the possibility of assassination—of consequent panic and stampede and riot.

<sup>1</sup> During the war, Rust became a Confederate brigadier.

As custom was, a platform had been built out from the Capitol's main portico. On this rough scaffolding Lincoln was to take the oath of office and deliver his eagerly awaited inaugural address. Word had come to Scott's headquarters during the night that in the midst of the exercises an attempt would be made to blow up the platform. By daylight, Colonel Stone had seen to it that an ample guard was stationed below, and from that side no access was possible.

When Buchanan and Lincoln rode together up Pennsylvania Avenue, the carriage at times was almost hidden from the view of those on the sidewalks. In front of it marched a detachment of sappers and miners—regulars from West Point; on either side rode double files of District volunteer cavalry; District infantry followed. One trained observer believed that "owing to the denseness of the military enclosure" a shot could not have reached Lincoln.<sup>2</sup> From the point at which the carriage stopped, a temporary wooden corridor led to the northern door of the Capitol. Armed men in civilian clothes were scattered among the crowd on the plaza and posted on roofs of adjacent buildings. Light artillery was placed where it could rake the streets. At a near-by corner Scott watched from a coupé—with his weight, the mounting of a horse was an effort.

Lincoln looked around for a spot where he might safely deposit his brand-new tall hat, and Douglas thereupon took charge of it and held it. The address was given quietly, with few gestures; but, according to the *Intelligencer*, Lincoln's clear, distinct voice was readily audible to the thousands before him. Behind him, with folded arms, Wigfall of Texas leaned insolently in the entrance.

"In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in *mine*," concluded the speaker, "is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail *you*. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. *You* have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while *I* shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect, and defend it.'

"I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory,

<sup>2</sup>Gobright, "Recollections of Men and Things"; p. 287.



stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

John Hay's friends, when they read those words of "haunting beauty," fancied that he, the budding poet, must have written them. At administering the oath, Chief Justice Taney, then within a week of his eighty-fourth birthday, was perceptibly moved by the grave tension of the scene.

Nothing untoward marred the day. But that very morning Secretary Holt had received from Major Anderson extraordinary dispatches saying that Fort Sumter could not be held without at least 20,000 men to take the batteries South Carolina had built. Within six weeks, war would begin. From the neighborhood of the President's Park and from the "West End," from spacious town houses and their walled gardens, disunion society already had begun to flit. At the Inauguration Ball young Henry Adams, feeling youthfully superior after his *Wanderjahre*, saw the new President, the new head of Washington's official society—a tall man with a "ploughed" face and not wholly at ease in white gloves, the fastidious Henry thought—a man who did not dance and who seemed preoccupied.

Preoccupied—Lincoln may well have been that. He knew he was surrounded by civilians who sympathized with disunion, by officers he could not trust. He knew that under Howell Cobb's direction the national credit had been sadly impaired; that on one side lay the slave state of Virginia, on the other the slave states of Delaware and Maryland; that the old order was crumbling before his eyes. Senator Benjamin of Louisiana had shown his respect for the chief magistracy by tastefully describing Buchanan as "a senile executive under the sinister influence of insane counsels." But compared with the volcanic stream of malignity that was beginning to be outpoured upon Buchanan's successor, this was as Hyperion to a satyr.

From the very start, Lincoln was threatened by enemies, cautioned by friends. His mail, said his secretaries, "was infested with brutal and vulgar menace, mostly anonymous," and heavy with the admonitions of excited well-wishers. It was rumored in March

that one Ben McCullough, secessionist desperado, had collected five hundred adventurers at Richmond for some enterprise of pith and moment—it might be to abduct the President and his entire Cabinet.

Stanton wrote from Washington to Buchanan in retirement at Lancaster:

The yard in front of the War Office is crowded with the District Militia, who are being mustered into service. The feeling of loyalty to the Government has greatly diminished in the city. Many persons who would have supported the Government under your administration refuse to be enrolled. Many who were enrolled have withdrawn, and refuse to take the oath. [April 11th]

A common impression, said Stanton, was that inside of thirty days Jefferson Davis would be in the city.<sup>3</sup>

On April 12th Fort Sumter was fired on; on the 14th its commander marched out with the honors of war; on the 15th Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteers. What had been spoken in darkness was forthwith heard in the light; for Leroy P. Walker, Confederate Secretary of War, gave notice to the universe that by May Day the flag of the Confederacy would float above the Capitol.

The first entry in John Hay's Washington diary—that for April 18th—captures for us the atmosphere of foreboding that rested on the city. That night the novelist Mrs. Ann S. Stephens brought to the Executive Mansion actress Jean M. Davenport, recently made Mrs. Col. Frederick W. Lander. The ladies wished to see the President on a matter connected with his personal safety; but as the President had gone to bed, Hay took their message—delighted, he says, at this chance interview with one whom he had admired as Julia, Medea, and Mona Lisa. It appeared that a young Virginian of Mrs. Lander's acquaintance had been in the city to buy a saddle; and, meeting her, had indiscreetly revealed that within forty-eight hours he and a half-dozen other bloods—among them a dare-devil from Richmond named Ficklin—would perform a deed with which the world would resound. From this, and from other things he let fall, Mrs. Lander had deduced that the intent was to kill or abduct Lincoln.

"They went away," ended Hay, "and I went to the bedside of

<sup>3</sup> G. T. Curtis, "Life of James Buchanan"; vol. ii, pp. 540, 542.

the Chief *couché*. I told him the yarn. He quietly grinned." Mrs. Lincoln's fears were allayed by "some very dexterous lying."

For several days after the Baltimore riot of April 19th, and before communications were reopened, a minor panic existed. If invaders from Maryland and Virginia should now join forces, what would save the city? Many families packed up their household goods. Lincoln's elemental patience was quite misunderstood. It was said that he was shallow, apathetic, incompetent; that he ought to be superseded. Yet, looking for the ships that were to bring expected troops, he scanned the river from his office window and—supposing himself to be alone—exclaimed, "Why don't they come? Why don't they come?" Brought by water to Annapolis from Philadelphia or Perryville, regiments soon marched in, and the situation was relieved.

One night every member of the family was taken sick. Hurry calls were sent out for doctors, and for a time there were headshakings and dark whispers of "Poison!"—as there had been in the case of Harrison in 1841 and of Taylor in 1850. But eventually the diagnosis was overindulgence in Potomac shad, a dish to which inlanders had not acquired full immunity.<sup>4</sup> If not one alarum, it was another. A gentleman would bring tidings that on the hills of Arlington had been planted a mortar battery commanding the town; or suspicious-looking craft would be sighted on mischievous errands. Many Southerners gave out that Lincoln, the temperance advocate, was consoling himself amid his miseries by drinking strong liquor.

Of the earlier written threats and warnings, most were on the face of them deemed unworthy of attention. If inquiry seemed to be indicated, it was carefully made by Nicolay and the War Department. But apparently nothing tangible was ever turned up—nothing sufficiently definite to afford ground for action. Again and again intelligence of a most specific character led nowhere save to confusion. "During my time, there were no substantial proofs of plots against the person of Lincoln," is the statement of Maj. William E. Doster, provost marshal of the military district

<sup>4</sup> Article by Mrs. E. T. G. Brown in *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Oct. 1926-Jan. 1927 (vol. xix, nos. 3-4).

of Washington from March 1862 to March 1863, while Gen. James S. Wadsworth was military governor. Doster once received from Ohio a letter claiming that the man who was to have killed Lincoln in Baltimore was then living in that state, and offering on certain terms to reveal his identity. After a conference with "Major Allen, head of my detective bureau," Doster returned the letter and nothing more was heard. Like many other army officers, Doster seems to have been ignorant of the fact that Major Allen and Allan Pinkerton were one and the same person.<sup>5</sup>

Major Doster has told us that while he was provost marshal of the Washington military district he was expected to preserve order in Washington City and Georgetown; receive and hold for exchange all prisoners of war and state; control passes to all persons or goods leaving or entering; supervise invoices; take care of all fugitive Negroes; prevent blockade-running; regulate all places of amusement and all sales of liquor; *guard the person of the President* (when in public); and report in person daily to Secretary Stanton or Assistant Secretary Watson. This was a considerable program for one man. Even with a mixed brigade at his disposal, it took a bit of doing; and after a year Doster gladly got leave to rejoin his regiment in the field.

"Soon after I was nominated at Chicago," said Lincoln to the artist Frank Carpenter in March 1864, "I began to receive letters threatening my life. The first one or two made me a little uncomfortable, but I came at length to look for a regular instalment of this kind of correspondence in every week's mail, and up to inauguration day I was in constant receipt of such letters. It is no uncommon thing to receive them now; but they have ceased to give me any apprehension."

Carpenter wondered at this. "Oh," answered Lincoln, with his peculiar inflection, "there is nothing like getting *used* to things!"

Maj. Gen. Edward D. Townsend, whose duties as assistant adjutant-general brought him frequently into contact with Lincoln, attested that "a large number of communications were received from several Northern States, Canada, Kentucky, and other parts of the South, and from Europe, especially from Germany,

<sup>5</sup> "Lincoln and Episodes of the Civil War"; p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> "Six Months in the White House"; pp. 62-63.



some of them anonymous, others signed with a name. All concurred in the declaration that a plot existed to assassinate President Lincoln and General Scott." Without Scott's knowledge, sentries were posted around his house at night.<sup>7</sup>

"On one occasion," wrote Col. L. C. Baker, ubiquitous head of the National Detective Bureau, "I carried to Mr. Lincoln two anonymous communications, in which he was threatened with assassination. In a laughing, joking manner, he remarked, 'Well, Baker, what do they want to kill me for? If they kill me, they will run the risk of getting a worse man.' " This, with variations, was his pet response. He had been reluctant to believe that his life might be endangered in Baltimore. "He had himself," wrote his secretaries, "so sane a mind, and a heart so kindly even to his enemies, that it was hard for him to believe in a political hatred so deadly as to lead to murder." <sup>8</sup>

During the first half of 1862, John Bigelow, United States consul-general at Paris, notified Secretary Seward that even at that distance reports had reached him of plots then maturing "against the lives of leading loyal statesmen in different cities of our republic." Seward, under date of July 15th, 1862, replied in part thus:

There is no doubt that from a period anterior to the breaking out of the insurrection, plots and conspiracies for purposes of assassination have been frequently formed and organized. And it is not unlikely that such an one as has been reported to you is now in agitation among the insurgents. If it be so, it need furnish no grounds for anxiety. Assassination is not an American practice or habit, and one so vicious and so desperate cannot be engrafted into our political system.

This conviction of mine has steadily gained strength since the Civil War began. Every day's experience confirms it. The President, during the heated season, occupies a country house near the Soldiers' Home, two or three miles from the city. He goes to and fro from that place on horseback, night and morning, unguarded. I go there unattended at all hours, by daylight and moonlight, by starlight and without any light." . . .<sup>9</sup>

This was a rather different Seward from the one who had rushed

<sup>7</sup> "Anecdotes of the Civil War in the United States"; p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> "History of the United States Secret Service"; p. 475. Nicolay and Hay; vol. x, pp. 286-287.

<sup>9</sup> Bigelow, "Retrospections of an Active Life"; vol. ii, pp. 547-548.

that urgent warning to Lincoln at Philadelphia. With the inauguration triumphantly over, he had by degrees been lulled into a fancied security. Time would lend a bitter import to these words—and to those other words of his, once spoken to John Hay: “You learn something of men and things, but never until too late to use it.”

It has been said that in no other modern city, save Paris during the Terror, has so strange a multitude been gathered as that which filled Washington in those harried years of the Civil War. By this multitude Lincoln hourly was surrounded. To it he was bent upon making himself approachable. He felt that he was attorney for the people; that he belonged to them—all of them. With a weary smile he said to Henry Wilson, “They don’t want much; they get but little, and I must see them.”

In the beginning, as efforts were made toward settling down to the routine of war, mounted guards were stationed at the carriage gates of the President’s House, and infantry guards at the foot gates. There was guard-mounting in military style, and William O. Stoddard of the secretarial force considered the residence “a pretty carefully guarded headquarters.” But Lincoln was bothered by this arrangement and got rid of it. It would never do, he said, for a President to have sentries with drawn sabers at his door—as if he were assuming to be an emperor.

At the main entrance a doorkeeper was on duty. Well known to Washington in this capacity was the courteous and witty Edward McManus, who had been a fixture since President Taylor’s day. On the second floor was an usher—the Prussian Louis Burgdorf, or some other; for executive business was transacted in the east wing of that floor. In the southeast corner was the secretaries’ office; next along the corridor, toward the west, was the office of the President, and beyond that the reception room. This plan—if plan it could be called—was strategically unsound, for the secretaries were not so placed that they could interpose themselves between the President and his visitors. But perhaps it made small difference, for, as Hay wrote, although those immediately about Lincoln “strove . . . to erect barriers to defend him against constant interruption, . . . he was always the first to break them down.”

The result was that, in dealing with callers, only the most primitive system obtained. Lunatics succeeded in getting to the doors of the executive offices and occasionally into Lincoln's very presence. He did not appear to mind greatly. He liked to talk with people; and, says Thayer, "he could usually get something, if it were only a quaint phrase, even from cranks." Yet all the while he was conscious that he sometimes might be running a risk.

In the first months, Hay seems to have taken as one of his special concerns the inspection of the Executive Mansion and the safekeeping of the President while in it. The house became for a time a barracks, with Governor Jim Lane's "Frontier Guards" bunking in the East Room. Hay has left us in his diary a little *genre*-piece of himself patrolling the house at midnight, while Major Hunter slept placidly on the floor and the watch—young, careless, and "too good to be food for gunpowder"—loafed by the furnace in the basement. A member of General Halleck's staff, Col. Charles Halpine (better known by his pen name Miles O'Reilly) was struck by Lincoln's accessibility. "I have many times entered the mansion," wrote Halpine, "and walked up to the rooms of the two private secretaries, as late as nine or ten o'clock at night, without seeing or being challenged by a single soul. There were, indeed, two attendants—one for the outer door, and the other for the door of the official chambers; but these—thinking, I suppose, that none would call after office hours save persons who were personally acquainted, or had the right of official entry—were, not infrequently, somewhat remiss in their duties."

The Colonel essayed to reason with Lincoln, "who heard me through with a smile, his hands locked across his knees, his body rocking back and forth—the common indication that he was amused."

"Now as to political assassination," he said, "do you think the Richmond people would like to have Hannibal Hamlin here any better than myself? In that one alternative, I have an insurance on my life worth half the prairie land of Illinois. And beside,"—this more gravely,—"if there were such a plot, and they wanted to get at me, no vigilance could keep them out. We are so mixed up in our affairs, that—no matter what the system established—a conspiracy to assassinate, if such there were, could easily obtain a pass to see me for any one or more of its instruments.

"To betray fear of this, by placing guards or so forth, would only be to put the idea into their heads, and perhaps lead to the very result it was intended to prevent. As to the crazy folks, Major, why I must only take my chances,—the worst crazy people at present, I fear, being some of my own too zealous adherents. That there may be such dangers as you and many others have suggested to me, is quite possible; but I guess it wouldn't improve things any to publish that we were afraid of them in advance." <sup>10</sup>

There was a bell rope for calling the secretaries, but often the President would go to them instead. At luncheon time he had "literally to run the gantlet" through the crowds as he made his way to the private rooms of the family in the west wing. When no engagement interfered, he usually spent the evening in his office. At the witching hour he would roam the halls—now and then in his nightshirt, short for his long shanks.

General Wadsworth, military governor and Major Doster's official superior, detailed a body of cavalry to accompany Lincoln to and from the Soldiers' Home<sup>11</sup> at the north of the city. On the grounds of the Home, in a beautiful grove, a brick dwelling had been set apart as the President's summer quarters. It was higher and cooler there than in town, and he could get a comfortable night's rest. He would travel either on horseback or in his everyday carriage, which was hardly better than the average Washington hack. By eight in the morning he would be back at his desk. The escort—dubbed by "secesh" ladies the "Janissaries"—had been detailed against his wish and he protested about it to General Halleck, then commander-in-chief. Spurs and sabers, he complained, made so much noise that Mrs. Lincoln and he, when they rode together, couldn't hear themselves talk. He said many of the men appeared to be raw recruits; and he was more afraid of the accidental discharge of their revolvers or carbines than he was of any deliberate attempt to abduct or kill him. The story was that he delighted in having the coachman, Francis Burke, suddenly put the carriage horses to the top of their speed and leave the "Janissaries" in the rear.

In the summer of 1863 this detachment was replaced by the

<sup>10</sup> Carpenter, "Six Months in the White House"; pp. 66-67. Vice-President Hamlin was a strong anti-slavery man.

<sup>11</sup> This was for veterans of the regular army.



Union Light Guard, an independent company organized, under permit of the War Department, by Governor Tod of Ohio. This picked troop of one hundred Ohioans—most of whom had seen service, some as commissioned officers—was mounted entirely on fine black horses. Its duties were to guard the carriage gates of the Executive Mansion and to act as escort to the President whenever he went out driving or on horseback. Two mounted guards, relieved at intervals, were stationed at each of the gateways. They were under the immediate command of a noncommissioned officer who stood on post by the front door while his mount was tied at the portico. Camped on the south lawn was an infantry company of Pennsylvania "bucktails," so named from the bucktails they wore in their hats. These men guarded the ends and southern front of the building.

Out at the Soldiers' Home the Union Light Guard had tents in the grove. It was a pleasant life, and the duties were easy; but in the summer of 1864 some of the men began to think the job irksome. So once when the President strolled down to the camp of an evening, as he often did after dinner, one of them made bold to explain to him that they felt there was greater need for them at the front. The President listened and then said with a twinkle:

"Well, my boy, that reminds me of an old farmer friend of mine in Illinois, who used to say he never could understand why the Lord put the curl in a pig's tail. It did not seem to him to be either useful or ornamental, but he guessed the Lord knew what he was doing when he put it there. I do not myself see the necessity of having soldiers traipsing around after me wherever I go, but Stanton, who knows a great deal more about such things than I do, seems to think it necessary, and he may be right. And if it is necessary to have soldiers here, it might as well be you as someone else. If you were sent to the front, someone would have to come from the front to take your place."

Then he added: "It is a soldier's duty to obey orders without question, and in doing that you can serve your country as faithfully here as at the front. And I reckon"—this with a smile—"it is not quite as dangerous here as it is there." He waved his hand and walked away. The men laughed, and so the matter ended.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, Jan. 1927; p. 13.

In late afternoon the President, frequently accompanied by Mrs. Lincoln, was likely to take an hour's drive. He had been persuaded that this was a needed airing for him after his day's work. If he wished to go out on horseback, either to the Soldiers' Home or elsewhere, he had no mount of his own but would send to the Light Guard's headquarters a request for a saddle horse. The one commonly selected, known to the troopers as Abe, was a large animal, high-headed and long-legged. Stirrup leathers, even when let out to the last hole, were always too short for Lincoln. On his "high horse" (as the men were used to saying), he made a figure proper enough when sitting at rest; but in motion his trousers worked upward for lack of straps, his arms flapped, his feet turned outward. Nevertheless, many a competent judge in that equestrian town thought that in the management of his steed the President could have held his own with the best riders.

Lincoln was a pretty difficult man to regulate. After reaching the Soldiers' Home at night he would occasionally go back to the city without escort along the lonely road—uneasy for news or summoned, perhaps, as he was to a council after Chattanooga, when Hay hurried out through the September moonlight to fetch him. Frank Carpenter and journalist Noah Brooks are two who tell of long walks with him at late hours through dark Washington streets, with no attendant or other companion whatever.

Gen. Schuyler Hamilton said that Lincoln during his first months in office liked to set out as early as four o'clock for a morning stroll. In slouched hat, soiled linen duster, and trousers "of frontier cut," he would visit horse corrals, hospitals, and camps, and would talk with the rank and file as if he, too, thought of enlisting. Scott, Hamilton said, induced Lincoln to forego the duster by misquoting Shakespeare to the effect that "there is a certain dignity should hedge about a king."<sup>13</sup>

It was told—this was at a later date—that Major Biddle, in charge of the provost marshal's mounted patrol, was riding along Pennsylvania Avenue when he encountered three horsemen—two officers with a civilian between them. As his duty was, he asked for their passes, but the three rode along, taking no notice of him.

<sup>13</sup> New York *Tribune*, June 20, 1889; p. 5.

"Show your passes or I'll arrest you," shouted Biddle.

"It's all right," said the civilian quietly. "These officers are going with me across the river."

"And who the deuce may you be?" demanded the Major.

"Oh," replied the civilian, "I'm Mr. Lincoln."

Biddle in telling the story would explain that he had taken the President for a Maryland farmer. But in Washington were eyes shrewder than the Major's and hearts filled with guile.

Lincoln's obliviousness to personal considerations is further shown by the manner in which he rushed to the burning stables on the night of February 10th, 1864. It was between ten and eleven o'clock when he came out of the Executive Mansion's front door and said to Sergeant Stimmel, who was on duty there, "Where's the fire? What's burning?" Stimmel said, "It seems to be around in the vicinity of the stables." By that time the firemen had arrived. Lincoln started on a dog trot with Stimmel after him, trying to keep up. A miscellaneous crowd had assembled. Lincoln asked whether the horses had been taken out; and learning that they had not, he pushed his way through and began to open one of the large doors. The whole interior of the brick building was in flames, however, and none of the animals was saved. The captain of the Light Guard then appeared on the scene, and with him a gentleman unknown to Stimmel.

"Mr. President," said the gentleman, "this is no place for you"—and, slipping his arm through Lincoln's, walked with him back to the house. Lincoln had been intent on saving the ponies that had meant so much to Willie and Tad. Of personal danger he had been completely forgetful.<sup>14</sup>

Since the Executive Mansion had no telegraphic connections, the President's telegrams were handled by the War Department. In Secretary Stanton's office and the cipher room of the military telegraph Lincoln spent more time than in any other one spot outside his own demesne. There he kept closely in touch with events at the front and sent out his own messages; in periods of crisis he was known to remain all night. Thrice daily—morning, afternoon, and evening—occasionally oftener, he would go across to the old

<sup>14</sup> *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, Jan. 1927; pp. 15-16.



War Department building. Somewhere between eleven and twelve at night was a time he favored. A brick walk, with a low wall along its southern border, led past a conservatory where later the executive office-building was located; and after dark only a few uncertain gas-lights broke the thick shadows of overhanging trees.

Even in the worst of weather the President, wearing his gray shawl and perhaps carrying a disreputable umbrella, would go alone along this footpath. But never was he allowed to return alone. Usually he was escorted back by a file of four soldiers and a noncommissioned officer.<sup>15</sup> This duty was many times performed by Sergt. Henry W. Knight, in charge of the detail of the Veteran Reserve Corps assigned as guard at the War Department. Knight recalled how, about one o'clock of a dismally rainy morning, Lincoln said to the escort, "Don't come out in this storm with me, boys. I have my umbrella, and can get home safely without you."

"But, Mr. President," objected Knight, "we have positive orders from Mr. Stanton not to allow you to return alone. You know we dare not disobey his orders."

"No, I suppose not," conceded Lincoln. "If Stanton should learn that you had let me return alone, he would have you court-martialed and shot inside of twenty-four hours."<sup>16</sup>

Lincoln enjoyed the drama, gaining refreshment from Shakespeare or a good comedy of the day. His knowledge of the Shakespearean plays matched his knowledge of the Bible. He liked to read aloud or recite passages from them to sympathetic listeners, and was partial to Richard's speech in the third act of the much-neglected "Richard II"—

For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground,  
And tell sad stories of the death of kings: . . .  
All murder'd.

"Richard II," "Hamlet," and "Macbeth" were among his preferences, and he was delighted with Falstaff as interpreted by James

<sup>15</sup> It would seem that now and then he was accompanied by only the vigorous Maj. T. T. Eckert, head of the telegraph office, or some other member of the telegraph staff.

<sup>16</sup> "Abraham Lincoln: Tributes from His Associates"; pp. 189-190.



H. Hackett. To Hackett, who was a personal friend and sometimes spent an evening with him, he wrote:

For one of my age I have seen very little of the drama. The first presentation of Falstaff I ever saw was yours, here last winter or spring. Perhaps the best compliment I can pay is to say as I truly can, I am very anxious to see it again. . . . I think nothing equals "Macbeth." It is wonderful. . . . [August 17th, 1863]

His study of the Shakespeare text led him occasionally to criticize Hackett's renderings. The cultured James E. Murdoch, another actor friend, visited Lincoln to give Shakespearean readings at the President's request; and when John E. McDonough called, Lincoln discussed "Henry IV" with him.

David H. Bates, cipher operator and manager of the War Department's telegraph office, speaks of how Lincoln read aloud to those in the office from well-worn pocket editions of "Macbeth" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor." "On one occasion," Bates says, "I was his only auditor, and he recited several passages to me with as much interest apparently as if there had been a full house."

For some time Lincoln was evidently accustomed to visit theaters in Washington without a guard. His only attendant, if he had one at all, would be Charles Forbes, the carriage footman, who was unarmed. Usually, though not invariably, he had some one with him—Mrs. Lincoln or Tad or both of them; his secretaries or other guests, both men and women. Hay's diary has such entries as:

The President and Mrs. Lincoln went to see "Fanchon." [October 30th, 1863]

. . . The President took Swett, Nicolay & me to Ford's with him to see Falstaff in Henry IV. . . . Hackett was most admirable. [December 19th, 1863]

Leonard Grover, proprietor of Grover's (National) Theatre, made note of the presence one evening of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln with Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House, "without guard or special attendance."<sup>17</sup> He said that he personally met the party at the curb and conducted it to a box. Lincoln commonly gave notice a day

<sup>17</sup> *Century Magazine*, April 1909; p. 946.

ahead and a box would be reserved for him. His presence was regarded by the managers as a good advertisement and they would gladly have supplied him with complimentary tickets. He declined their offers, however, and the messenger or secretary who called for the tickets invariably was instructed to pay.

Once when W. O. Stoddard and the President went to see Hackett, Stoddard recorded this impression:

There was a storm of applause when he came in, and now it seems as securely safe a corner of the great Washington City fort as any which could be selected. He is incomparably better guarded here, to any critical human eye, than if he were walking through the White House grounds, or to and from the house of one of the secretaries, alone, or with only an unarmed attendant.

In this feeling Stoddard was perhaps confirmed by an incident on another occasion, when he and the President were attending a concert at Ford's. From the middle aisle of the orchestra seats rose a "harsh, croaking voice," audible all over the house: "He hasn't any business here! That's all he cares for his poor soldiers!" The next instant, "poor soldiers" grabbed this individual, hustled him to the door, and tossed him out.

It must be remembered that boxes in the theaters of that time were quite different from the *loges* of later playhouses. The stage projected beyond the proscenium arch in what was termed an apron. Boxes were over the stage, and were separated from the auditorium proper not by mere *portières* but by doors that could be locked. They were therefore more removed and private than is the case today. Second-tier boxes were counted more desirable than the lower.

It was finally thought best to have a special guard for the President, and William B. Webb, chief of the Metropolitan Police, detailed four police officers for duty at the Executive Mansion. These men wore civilian clothing, carried their revolvers concealed, and walked with—not behind—the President. One of them was supposed to attend him on his walks to the War Department or elsewhere; to stand guard at night outside the private rooms of the Lincolns; and when Lincoln went to the theater, to protect him from the time he left the carriage until he re-entered it. It is doubtless true that the morale of the Metropolitan Police was

none too high and that individual officers were of questionable loyalty. Yet three of the officers assigned to this special duty—William H. Crook, Alphonso Donn, and Thomas Pendel—would seem to have ranked well for intelligence, fidelity, and general character. Donn and Pendel were detailed on November 3rd, 1864; Crook was appointed on January 4th, 1865.

Among those about Lincoln, at least two men became convinced that his theatergoing should be discouraged. One was Secretary Stanton; the other, Marshal Lamon. So emphatic grew Lamon that on December 10th, 1864, at half-past one in the morning, he wrote to the President. His letter shows that even after plain-clothes officers had been detailed, Lincoln did not always make use of them.

I regret that you do not appreciate what I have repeatedly said to you in regard to the proper police arrangements connected with your household and your own personal safety. *You are in danger.* I have nothing to ask, and I flatter myself that you will at least believe that I am honest. If, however, you have been impressed differently, do me and the country the justice to dispose at once of all suspected officers, and accept my resignation of the marshalship, which is hereby tendered. I will give you further reasons which have impelled me to this course. To-night, as you have done on several previous occasions, you went unattended to the theater. When I say unattended, I mean that you went alone with Charles Sumner and a foreign minister, neither of whom could defend himself against an assault from any able-bodied woman in this city. And you know, or ought to know, that your life is sought after, and will be taken unless you and your friends are cautious; for you have many enemies within our lines. . . .<sup>18</sup>

During the war all places of amusement in Washington were packed. The legitimate theaters did a land-office business. Auditoriums were large then—either Grover's or Ford's would accommodate 2,500. Prices were moderate—a quarter for the family circle, fifty cents for the dress circle, seventy-five cents for the orchestra. This meant at least three hours of entertainment. Guest stars included the best talent of the day, and the stock companies were excellent. The promiscuous audiences were cross sections of the motley swarm that was Washington. Desperate men were often there—men imbruted by war, ready to kill; and weapons were

<sup>18</sup> "Recollections of Abraham Lincoln"; pp. 274-275.

common wear. Of all this, no doubt, Stanton and Lamon had thought, and of the fact that Lincoln must walk from the curb to a second-tier box and back again.

Once, on the edge of evening, the President could not be found and Lamon was notified. Posthaste he set out for the Soldiers' Home, and near its gateway he encountered a carriage followed by a man on horseback. "Halt!" commanded the Marshal, and they halted. Stanton was in the carriage; the man on horseback was an orderly.

"Where is Mr. Lincoln?" the Secretary broke out. "I've looked for him everywhere. I have been to the Soldiers' Home and he isn't there. I'm exceedingly uneasy about him." The Stanton who had sneered at Lincoln for "creeping" into Washington was now himself alarmed and showed it in voice and manner.

Lamon turned his horse about and rode for the Executive Mansion. There he found Lincoln walking across the grounds toward the War Department. Where the President had been does not appear from Lamon's story, but he seems to have been unconscious of the flutter he had caused. That night and for three or four nights afterward (according to Lamon) he slept at Lamon's house, Mrs. Lincoln being in New York at the time. He must have done so to please Lamon.<sup>19</sup> "Lamon," he told John P. Usher, Secretary of the Interior, "is a monomaniac on the subject of my safety. . . . What does any one want to assassinate me for?"

Of course he was, as Nicolay and Hay put it, "too intelligent not to know he was in some danger." An incident given by Thomas Pendel, one of the special guards, is directly in point. The stairs leading to Stanton's private office in the War Department were divided into two flights by a broad landing. One day when Lincoln and Pendel on their way down had got as far as this landing, they met a man coming up—a thickset man in gray clothes, who narrowly regarded Lincoln. Pendel noticed that Lincoln in turn looked steadily at the man, as if memorizing his features. After they had left the building, the President said to Pendel:

"Last night I received a letter from New York stating that there would be a man here who would attempt to take my life.

<sup>19</sup> "Recollections"; pp. 270-271.



In that letter was a description of the man who was said to be anxious to kill me. His size and the kind of clothes he would wear when he would make the attempt were carefully described. The man we just passed agreed exactly with the description given me in that letter." Who was the stranger in gray? From the upper floor he turns a last glance upon Lincoln and vanishes beyond our ken. Lincoln speaks casually—but whatever else the man in gray may have been, he was another reminder of the arrow by day and the terror by night.

Now, according to the Great American Myth, no sort of thought was ever really taken for the safeguarding of Lincoln. There was just a shiftless neglect of any decent precaution. Or, more dreadful still, there were those near to him, trusted and high in power, who purposely saw to it that there should be no decent precaution, because their traitorous wish was to be rid of him.

From what we have seen it must, as a matter of fact, be clear that plenty of thought was taken and a great deal done, though at first, because of inexperience, the management was rather loose. As the war progressed, more attention and care were devoted to the matter. It is plain to us now that too many different agencies were employed, responsibility was too divided, centralized authority was lacking. There were, it seems to us, singular oversights. For example, it is not disclosed that he was especially guarded at public receptions, and he was allowed to speak to crowds at night from upper windows of the Executive Mansion. In both cases he was jeopardized, though apparently nobody thought so then.

We have today the Secret Service bureau of the Treasury Department, into whose sole charge are intrusted the persons of President and President-elect. This system, the result of experience, is obviously an improvement. Yet guards were close at hand when William McKinley was shot, and also when Franklin Roosevelt narrowly escaped the bullet intended for him. In spite of the comprehensive machinery of European police, the nineteenth century was marked on the Continent as a century of political assassinations. King Alexander of Yugo-Slavia, though presumed well-guarded, was shot in 1934.

Lincoln was not only fatalistic and indifferent to his own safety but also by choice a man of simple ways, on principle disliking airs of official importance, just as he disliked swallow-tailed coats. He was continually kicking over the traces of official harness. Most of those who served him came naturally enough to humor his predilections—as they humored his dented “stovepipe” hat, with its nap all rubbed askew. He had, too, a sensitive regard for others; for their difficulties, their labors, their weariness. “I went with him to the Soldiers’ Home,” wrote John Hay, “and he read Shakespeare to me, the end of ‘Henry V’ and the beginning of ‘Richard III,’ till my heavy eyelids caught his considerate notice, and he sent me to bed.” Some there were, too small to value it, who would seek to take advantage of this humanity in him; but they were likely to find he was not a man to be imposed upon.

When he sat for his portrait by Healy in the winter of 1864, Lincoln had many talks with the artist. Now and then he revealed some opinion or trait. “He confided that the protection insisted upon by his guards irked him. Sometimes, he said, he managed to elude them, but felt so repentant when he realized their anxiety that he promised them each time to be more careful.”<sup>20</sup>

One night Robert Lincoln strode into the secretaries’ room and announced: “I have just had a great row with the President of the United States!” It seemed that Stanton, in an unwonted mood of fun, had commissioned Tad lieutenant; whereupon what did Tad do but dismiss the regular guard, order a consignment of rifles, line up the gardeners and other servants, and put them on sentry duty! When Robert found this out, he took his objections to the President, but the President did not see fit to punish Tad as Robert recommended. “. . . He evidently looks upon it as a good joke,” grumbled Robert, “and won’t do anything about it!”<sup>21</sup>

As soon as Tad had gone to bed, the impromptu guard was without more ado discharged. It may have been, therefore, that for at least one night (though not through any deep-laid plot) the Executive Mansion lacked suitable protection; but that would not disquiet the President. Assassination was to him a well-worn

<sup>20</sup> Marie de Mare in the magazine section of the *New York Times*, May 9, 1937; p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Carpenter, “Six Months in the White House”; p. 300.

theme. He might ridicule his military behavior in the Black Hawk campaign, or profess that he would make a poor soldier. But the trip from Harrisburg, with the wretched distortion of it in the public mind, had ingrained one thing deeply in him. A very different ruler of men—Cárdenas of Mexico, a violent land—thus phrased it for himself: *It is important that the people know I come among them without fear.*

As to the suggestion that any person or group of persons holding distinguished office in Washington sought treacherously to bring Lincoln to his end—this has nothing to support it but labored innuendo, at variance with the facts. Wendell Phillips once in Faneuil Hall rebuked “the recreant American—the slanderer of the dead.” It was Attorney-General Austin of Massachusetts against whom he thundered, but Austin was by no means the last of the breed.

Lincoln’s Washington had plenty of picturesque characters besides Lincoln himself. “Thad” Stevens was one. Another was Walt Whitman, with whom Lincoln exchanged “very cordial” bows and whose ruddy cheeks, with their encirclement of silver hair, actually got him arrested by an officer who believed them a disguise. Still another was the Polish Adam Gurowski. Generally styled Count Gurowski, he was an expert linguist, had written books in German and French, and was employed in the State Department as a translator from 1861 to 1863. There he fell out with Seward, who discharged him. He was a rabid critic of Lincoln, and his “Diary,” of which the first volume was issued in 1862, contained—interlarded with canny observations on the progress of the war—insulting references to the President as well as to many others in government or army. Hay, who called him an “old nuisance,” has a story at second hand of Gurowski’s drawing a revolver in furious rage at a man with whom he had quarreled.

Lamon says—and from Lamon alone do we hear of any such thing—that Lincoln suspected Gurowski.

So far as my personal safety is concerned, Gurowski is the only man who has given me a serious thought of a personal nature. From the known disposition of the man, he is dangerous wherever he may be. I



have sometimes thought that he might try to take my life. It would be just like him to do such a thing.

Thus Lamon quotes Lincoln. We know, however, that Gurowski was explicit in his dislike of Lamon, and by way of returning the compliment Lamon may possibly have enlarged upon some chance utterance of Lincoln's. Gurowski detested Seward and Sumner about as thoroughly as he did Lincoln, but neither of them seems ever to have been worried regarding him. Nor was John Hay, though Gurowski, on seeing Hay in Mrs. Charles Eames' parlor, would go out growling.

Few could have recalled that in Washington an attempt had one time been made to shoot a President. It was on January 30th, 1835. Funeral ceremonies in honor of Warren R. Davis, a member from North Carolina, had just been held in the Hall of Representatives. (This was the room later known as Statuary Hall, or sometimes as the National Chamber of Horrors.) A procession was formed to escort the body and President Jackson, walking in the procession, was stepping out on the portico. Suddenly at point-blank range a man leveled a pistol at him and drew the trigger. The cap exploded but the pistol missed fire. Quickly the man tried a second pistol—with like result. Jackson dashed at him with uplifted cane, and a Lieutenant Gedney of the Navy knocked the fellow down. He turned out to be an Englishman named Lawrence—Samuel Lawrence, a house painter. Harriet Martineau was there and saw Lawrence's "hands and half-bare arms struggling above the heads of the crowd in resistance to being handcuffed." <sup>22</sup>

The *Globe* insinuated that "a secret conspiracy had prompted the perpetration of the horrible deed." For a while the President himself believed as much; and it is said that he even had grave doubts of an old friend, George Poindexter of Mississippi. Lawrence was, however, adjudged irresponsible (he said that Jackson had deprived him of the British crown), and no evidence of conspiracy was shown. An expert in small arms figured that the chance of two successive misfires was one in one hundred and twenty-five thousand. So near did Andrew Jackson come to being the first President of the United States struck down by a bullet.

<sup>22</sup> "Retrospect of Western Travel": vol. i, pp. 161-164.



## Four . . . THE TRUE JOHN BOOTH

ABOUT the middle of February 1861, L. E. Chittenden (afterward Register of the Treasury) and another "Young Republican"—both of them members of a "committee of safety" in Washington—visited Baltimore, bent upon their own special inquiries. From a Unionist group there they culled divers particulars of subversive activities in that city, and these they transmitted to Elihu Washburne. In the story as Chittenden told it after a lapse of years, one detail now stands out—a cursory reference to an unnamed actor who at clandestine meetings was wont to recite passages of "Julius Cæsar."

Among actors familiar to Baltimore was a young man of whom a sister long remembered that when studying at home he chose "Julius Cæsar" as an elocutionary practice-piece and by the hour declaimed its mouth-filling speeches, permitting no deviations from the text in so much as a syllable. He was, it happens, the same young man whom we found playing at Albany's Gayety Theatre on the night of February 18th, 1861, and whose disunion views were loudly expressed and ill-received at Stanwix Hall. It has been charged that he was among those who during the "three glorious days" (April 19th, 20th, and 21st, 1861) went out in parties from Baltimore, under the direction of Marshal Kane, to burn bridges on railway lines running northward.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps he was. It would have been like him. He said fiercely

<sup>1</sup> This was asserted by W. G. Snethen, a lawyer of Baltimore, in *The Commonwealth* (Boston), Apr. 22, 1865; p. 2. It could have been possible. Booth did not open his third Albany engagement until the night of Apr. 22, 1861. (Snethen was a member of the Republican committee from Baltimore that went to Pennsylvania to greet Lincoln on his journey to Washington.)

of Lincoln: "That sectional candidate should never have been President, the votes were *doubled* to seat him. He was smuggled through Maryland to the White House. . . . Look at the cannon on the heights of Baltimore. It needed just that to keep her quiet. . . . He is Bonaparte in one great move, that is, by overturning this blind Republic and making himself a king."

Around the young actor's life has been woven an intricate veil of fictions. The fictions begin with his birth, for 1839 has often been given as the year; Belgium has been mentioned as the place; and he has been called the youngest of the Booths. John Wilkes Booth was born on May 10th, 1838, three miles east of Belair, county-town of Harford (not, as occasionally printed, Hartford) County, Maryland, and some twenty-five miles northeast of Baltimore; and he was the next to the youngest of the family. His name was from the eighteenth-century English reformer John Wilkes, a rather scandalous individual who did good service for popular liberties in Britain, criticized George the Third, sought justice for the American colonies, and in spite of all became lord mayor of London. To this John Wilkes the great-grandmother of John Wilkes Booth, Elizabeth Wilkes, was said to have been related.

John Wilkes Booth—known to his brothers as simply John or Johnny—has been pictured as a villain from his cradle; as a half-demoniac creature of savage instincts; as a "ham" actor—ranting, boisterous, lazy, devoid of talent; as a showy fellow, coarse-grained, trivial, and vain. He has been variously described as the hireling of a Southern junto, an emissary of the Roman Church, the accomplice of Andrew Johnson in a scheme of high-vaulting ambition, the allotted deputy of the Knights of the Golden Circle, the avenger of a friend, the spearhead of a cabal within the Federal government.

He it was whose frenzy closed one era of our national life and opened another. But both government and qualified historians tried to dismiss him into limbo; a superficial and false chronicle was established in the record; and the whole subject quite naturally fell into the hands of "historical" novelists, novelizing journalists, and persons with axes to grind.

Much of what has since been written regarding John Booth is

a dilution of a series of popular articles by George Alfred Townsend ("Gath"), special correspondent of the *New York World*. When his articles were issued in pamphlet form, the author, just turned twenty-four, guardedly explained that they did not "assume to be literal history." "As a brochure of the day,—nothing more," he said, "—I give these Sketches of a Correspondent to the public." They supplied a lack at the time but, as Townsend himself was evidently aware, they offered no proper substance for the conscientious historian or biographer.<sup>2</sup> Beginning with Townsend, all sorts of erroneous ideas have thickly collected round Booth, his deed, his fate; and on this account, as well as through general ignorance, it has been possible to foist specious pseudo-history and sham biography upon the ordinary reader.

In 1821 "Booth the Elder"—Junius Brutus Booth, English tragedian, rival of Edmund Kean—came from his London triumphs to the United States. For three decades he continued popular with American audiences, which delighted in his forceful, impetuous style and in the often apocryphal tales of his eccentricities.<sup>3</sup> Even during his lifetime he acquired an almost legendary character. There was, in fact, a curious suggestion that he had a "double" for whose vagaries he frequently was blamed. This double, it was said, was impressed into making a stage appearance for him on at least one occasion, and had an embarrassing way of declaiming Shakespeare at street corners and then passing the hat.

In his stateroom on a Mississippi steamboat the elder Booth died forlornly in 1852. Drink had beclouded his life and his art, and made his unstable nature more difficult. When his antic disposition was on, he was strange enough. Yet it will hardly do to label him a madman. He was linguist, playwright, scholar, eclectic philosopher; and as an actor he must have been touched with authentic genius.

Pathetic rather than amusing is his own revealing memorandum—made at a time when theaters were bidding for his services—of his wish to become keeper of the Hatteras light. He was to

<sup>2</sup> Townsend's novel "Katy of Catoctin" introduces Booth and contains some useful first-hand notes. His "How Wilkes Booth Crossed the Potomac," in the *Century* for April 1884, is a valuable study.

<sup>3</sup> British opinion has rated him less highly. See, for example, the "Dictionary of National Biography."

have twenty acres of land and to raise his own vegetables and fruits. Eventually, in the isolation of the Harford woodlands, on a property of 150 acres, he found the resting place he had sought. It was pleasant, after seasons of heavy *répertoire* and tedious journeys, to return to this peace—to open-air living, to mockingbirds and orioles. An earlier log dwelling was replaced by a brick cottage showing an English influence in gables, casements, and diamond panes. Orchard and vineyard were planted; barn, stables, dairy were built, and quarters for the Negro slaves who did most of the heavy labor of the farm. For Massa Brutus viewed farming seriously—subscribing to an agricultural paper, studying the uses of fertilizers, and taking a deep pride in the fact that his homespun blankets and other woolens were from the backs of his own sheep. To his few Negroes he was kind and liberal.

Such was the environment, such the rural atmosphere into which John Booth was born. Despite Junius Brutus' reputed irregularities, there seems to have been nothing specially outlandish or peculiar about that home. Undoubtedly it had an English tinge, did not run true to the conventional ways of the region, and hence would be an object of mistrustful comment among the neighbors. There was, too, a further count against it.

In 1838 Richard Booth, the grandfather, was living in the household at Belair. As a young man he had set out for America during the Revolutionary War to enlist in the cause of freedom; and though he did not then reach these shores, yet as a barrister in London he adorned his drawing room with a portrait of Washington to which all on entering were requested to bow. Finally, in days of quiet, he did get to America; and around Belair and Hickory and Churchville it was told to his shame that he wrought what he could in freedom's cause by helping many a slave to escape to the soil of Pennsylvania. This was French "red republicanism" with a vengeance, and quite sufficient to establish him and the whole *ménage* as an odd lot. Inasmuch as he died in 1839, it is not likely that he was remembered by John, who assuredly did not at all partake of his spirit. John T. Ford says (in the Ford MSS.) that although Richard never was prosecuted, Junius Brutus "did on more than one occasion pay for a runaway." ("A representative from Louisiana [Morse], during the debate on the



compromise of 1850, said in the House: 'A Union is not worth a curse as long as distinction exists between negroes and horses.' 'Niggers are property, sir,' an illiterate slave-holder told Olmsted, 'the same as horses and cattle; and nobody has any more right to help a negro that has run away than he has to steal a horse.' ")<sup>4</sup>

Junius Brutus held opinion with Pythagoras as to the taking of animal life; and while he was in charge at the farm, all life there, both wild and domestic, was supposed to be sacred—even turkey buzzards and copperheads were to be spared. "Cruelty," he said, "is the offspring of idleness of mind and beastly ignorance, and, in children, should be repressed and not encouraged, as is too often the case, by unthinking beings who surround them." Though on moonlit nights in autumn the countryside echoed to the baying of hounds, the Booth boys took no part in the 'possum-hunt. Presumably the neighbors thought this queer, for it was against the custom of the country; but it was not a kind of training calculated to make lads careless with firearms. When John Booth was a youngster, his sensibility led him to rescue a katydid or even to go out of his way to avoid injuring a lightning bug.

From 1842 onward we find the Booths living for part of the year in Baltimore—first on High Street, then on Front Street, and lastly at 62 North Exeter. John went to school in Baltimore, though vacations were passed at the farm. According to his sister Asia, he was, as a student, less quickly receptive than his brothers, but more persevering and tenacious. To the family's diversion he toiled away at memorizing parts of Byron's "Giaour"—years afterward he could repeat them word for word. Nor was he moody or "temperamental." It was not he but Asia who was the refractory subject of the hypothetical "goddess of good temper" that presided over the house.

John's eldest brother, Junius Brutus the second—known in the family as June—had been born in 1821 and was therefore considerably older. Large, robust, jovial, he had entered a theatrical career as actor and manager. As an actor he was capable but not highly gifted, the title rôle in "King John" being considered his best part. In his later years he conducted a resort hotel at Manchester-by-the-Sea in Massachusetts. Edwin, older than John by

<sup>4</sup> Rhodes, vol. i, p. 369.

more than four years, made his professional *début* at sixteen, and after John's schooldays in Baltimore the two saw comparatively little of each other. In 1852 Edwin left for California, where he appeared under June's management; then as a star he went in 1854 with Laura Keane to Sydney and Melbourne; and on his way back from Australia he briefly managed the Royal Hawaiian Theatre at Honolulu. Joseph Adrien ("Doc"), less than two years younger than John, had no bent for the stage but after a medical course became an ear-and-throat specialist and opened an office in New York. The older sister, Rosalie (usually called Rose), was of delicate health and so withdrawn that, although she lived to be sixty-five, it has been said that she died in infancy. She devoted herself to the care of the mother, Mary Ann Booth, an exceptional woman, whose favorite was ever the affectionate but careless John.

At the Exeter Street house Edwin and John got up private theatricals, the casts of which were filled out with young friends. An actor often taking part was Henry W. Mears, who almost to his ninety-first birthday vigorously survived as a direct link with John Booth, whom he knew well, and with events in Baltimore during the Civil War period and the years immediately thereafter. John was for a time a pupil at a boarding school in a Quaker settlement at Cockeysville, Baltimore County. It was while he was there that, in the very pattern of melodrama, a Gypsy read his fortune from his hand. He jotted down her words:

Ah, you've a bad hand. . . . You'll break hearts, they'll be nothing to you. You'll die young. . . . You're born under an unlucky star. You've got in your hand a thundering crowd of enemies. . . . You'll make a bad end, and have plenty to love you afterwards. . . . Now, young sir, I've never seen a worse hand, and I wish I hadn't seen it. . . .

He had laughed at this—but ever and again it would trouble him.<sup>5</sup>

With his younger brother he was next sent to St. Timothy's Hall at Catonsville, a military academy under Episcopalian auspices. Most of the cadets were from the South and all of John's intimates were Southerners. The corps was drilled in the use of the rifle and of light artillery; and on Wednesday and Saturday

<sup>5</sup> Farjeon (ed.), "The Unlocked Book" (Eng. ed.); pp. 57-58.

afternoons, when school did not keep, John and others with Colt's revolvers ranged the near-by woods in quest of small game. Thus, exempt from the ban that obtained at the Booth farm, he became a good shot. While at the Hall he was baptized into the Episcopal Church. In after days a classmate described him as "noble in mind, generous to a fault, and honorable in all his actions." The cadets nicknamed him "Billy Bowlegs"; but if his legs were bowed (as several have said they were), it must have been but slightly, for in subsequent portraits of him the defect is not noticeable. Contemporary evidence presents him as of winning appearance, charming manners, lively disposition, and kindly nature.

There was but one thing about him, one strain in him, that his mates remembered as seeming different and peculiar. When they would discuss cherished ambitions—how they dreamed of outshining Reverdy Johnson, perhaps, or Webster, or some other distinguished American—John seemed to them to accent notoriety. No matter how extravagant and *outré* the deed, he thought of doing something that by its sheer impact must enforce recognition and insure remembrance. He once put his notions into this form:

I wish there was an arch or statue at the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea, across the Strait of Gibraltar, with one side resting on the rock of Gibraltar and the other on an equally prominent rock on the coast of Africa. I would leave everything and never rest until I had devised some means to throw it over into the sea. . . . All Europe, Asia, and Africa would resound with the name of John Booth. I tell you it would be the greatest feat ever executed by one man.

"Billy," a listener objected, "suppose the falling statue took you down with it, what good would all your glory do you then?"

"I should die," rejoined John, "with the satisfaction of knowing I had done something never before accomplished—something no other man would probably ever do." <sup>6</sup>

It was boyish gasconade in an idle hour. We must not read too much into it—but

The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.

When he came back from the Hall, John settled down to farming for a while, acting as overseer of the slave hands and of the

<sup>6</sup> "The Unlocked Book" (Eng. ed.); pp. 149-150.

hired white labor needed at harvest. He was really fond of country living, of what he termed the "earth's healthy breath." In his own bookcase, besides schoolbooks and Shakespeare, were Greek and Roman histories, Milton, Byron, Poe, N. P. Willis, Longfellow, Whittier, and Felicia Hemans; Marryatt was there, too, and Bulwer-Lytton (Asia felt that John might not be benefited by Bulwer's wildly romantic vein); and Asia and John read Plutarch's "Lives" together, and Hawthorne, and quantities of poetry.

John broke and rode a black colt he had named Cola di Rienzi, after Bulwer's hero. It may have been this horse on which (according to a statement of Edwin's) he charged across the farm, spouting heroic speeches and flourishing a lance, relic of the Mexican War. At any rate he was a skillful and fearless rider. Edwin's impression of him at this period was of a good-hearted, fun-loving, essentially gentle boy, but a "rattle-pated" one, filled with Quixotic ideas.

Asia, who knew him better than did Edwin, wrote, "... He was a singular combination of gravity and joy." His bedroom faced the east—he wished a morning view. He said: "Don't let us be sad. Life is so short—and the world is so beautiful"—the cry not of Young Werther but of Horace the Epicurean. Yet he liked sad music best—"Ben Bolt," for example, or the plaintive Negro folk-songs. Now and then he would recur to the Gypsy. Hers had been strange words; he knew them by heart. But, of course, strange words were a fortune-teller's trade when her palm was crossed—it was a mere pretense of occult knowledge. . . . What was it she had said? *You'll die young.*

Though enjoying Negro music, he held toward Negroes themselves, as human beings, an attitude of mingled amusement and contempt. His associations at St. Timothy's Hall had quickened his youthful prejudice for the South's "peculiar system" and he was becoming increasingly fanatical about Southern "rights." Furthermore, he was attending Know-Nothing meetings—clandestine meetings by night—and often getting home at dawn. Irish immigration into Maryland had given pro-slavery folk an uneasy feeling that in the long run slave labor would not be able to compete with free labor. The American Party (actually a secret so-



ciety whose members were commonly styled Know-Nothings because of their professed ignorance of its objects) was opposed to foreign immigration, and some of the pro-slavery element in Maryland believed that here was a handy means of curbing the inroads of white labor. Opinion in the state was, to be sure, divided on this as on almost everything else, but Know-Nothing tactics fomented disorder.<sup>7</sup>

Public mass meetings were also held by the Know-Nothings, and crowds flocked to these for an outing as well as for the oratory. At one such meeting in Harford County, John was conspicuous in gala raiment, topped by an official's badge. A great turnout was present, for the speaker of the day was Henry Winter Davis, a lawyer of Baltimore and Know-Nothing representative in Congress. When the Know-Nothing movement petered out nationally, Davis united with the Constitutional Union Party of Bell and Everett. Though still later he became a Republican, he was among Lincoln's bitterest and most relentless personal opponents. Much admired for his eloquence, he made a strong impression in the House, and his friends were roundly convinced that, had he lived, he would have left "the most brilliant name in the parliamentary annals of America." Under such leadership, there can be no doubt that young John Booth, with his prepossessions and his small experience of the great world, was deeply influenced by the tenets and rites of the Know-Nothings.

The farm did not prosper. A neighbor took it on shares but this experiment, promising at first, turned out badly. Then one morning John rode away on Cola to Baltimore for a few days' visit; and when he got home he said, with a new look on his face, a new ring in his voice: "Guess what I've done! I've made my first appearance on any stage!" He had played Richmond in "Richard III" at the St. Charles Theatre—"for this night only."

Already he had been looking toward the stage. For ease and "deportment" he had studied dance steps with J. R. Codet, a

<sup>7</sup> Lincoln wrote (August 1855) to Joshua Speed: "You inquire where I now stand. That is a disputed point. I think I am a Whig; but others say there are no Whigs, and that I am an Abolitionist. . . . I am not a Know-Nothing, that is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people?"

stage dancer then well known. (Those were days when "deportment" was as much expected from a "ute"—or general utility—as from a leading man.) Gaining what he could from treatises on the voice, he had practiced elocution in the Belair woods; but Asia and he had decided that an instructor was necessary. He thought himself angular and ungraceful. "I can never," he lamented, "be a nimble skip-about like Romeo. I'm too square and solid." Asia had held the book while he recited poetry and Shakespearean tragedies—especially "Julius Cæsar." "How," he had asked her, "shall I ever have a chance on the stage?"

Now he felt the chance had come. He confided to Asia that he wished to be distinctively a Southern actor, beloved of the Southern people. There followed intensive home drill in acting versions of Shakespeare—in "The Merchant," in Cibber's adaptation of "Richard III," above all in "Julius Cæsar." Though not a quick student, John was dogged; though untrained, he was determined and, as the untrained so often are, rich in assurance. It was useless to seek to dissuade him. After all, Edwin had ventured at even an earlier age—when only sixteen he had played Tressel. John appeared again in Baltimore—Baltimore, where he had so many friends; and this time it was to Edwin's Richard that he played Richmond.

In the summer of 1857 he joined the stock company at Philadelphia's Arch Street Theatre, of which William Wheatley was then lessee and manager. The regular season opened on August 15th, and among twenty-nine "distinguished names" listed in a preliminary advertisement was "Mr. J. B. Wilks—from the N. York Theatres, his 1st appearance in Phila." True, "Mr. Wilks" was not very distinguished as yet; and exactly how he could have been from the "N. York Theatres" we need not trouble to inquire. Allston Brown's "History of the American Stage" says he made his *début* as Second Mask in Hannah Cowley's "The Belle's Stratagem" and remained during that season. For the season of 1858-1859 we find him at Richmond, where he was a member of the stock company of the Marshall Theatre (commonly known as the Richmond), then managed by George Kunkel. As Richmond in 1858 was a city of only about 35,000, the members of the company were known, at least by sight, to many of the townsfolk. The



*From an O'd Print*

## THE RICHMOND THEATRE IN 1865

(After a sketch by J. R. Hamilton)

This building (with the United States flag floating above it), at the corner of Broad and Seventh Streets, was built on the site of the Marshall (or Richmond) Theatre, upon whose stage John Booth appeared as a member of the stock company. The older building, opened November 14th, 1838, was burned January 2nd, 1862; that here shown was built the same year. A train of the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac is standing on Broad Street. It was here that Booth entrained with the Richmond Grays for Charlestown and the hanging of John Brown





season opened on September 4th and on the 10th John was writing thus to Edwin:<sup>8</sup>

Dear Ted

I would have written to you before this, but I have been so busily engaged, and am such a slow writer that I could not find time. I am rooming with H Langdon, he has stoped drinking and we get along very well together. This climate dont agree with me. I have felt ill ever since I have been here. I called on Dr Beal soon after I arrived here. He and his Lady seem a very nice couple. I like them very much. He has put me under a course of medicine, the same I have been subject to before. I understand it is that that makes me so languid and stupid. I have played several good parts, seince I have been here, Cool in London Assurance last night. I believe I am getting along very well. I like the people, place, and Management, so I hope to be very comfortable. There is only one objection and that is I believe every one knows me already. I have heard my name—Booth—called for, one or two nights, and on account of the *likeness* the papers deigned to mention me. How are you getting along. I had hoped to hear from you before this. Give Mother my love. For I may not be able to write her this week, as they are casting Miss Mitchell's peices, and I will have much to study. Excuse this dull letter. God bless you, write soon, and believe me I am ever your affectionate Brother

John.

John wished to make his own reputation before appearing under the Booth name and for that reason objected to being recognized by his resemblance to Edwin. "Miss Mitchell" is presumably Maggie Mitchell, whose elfin performance in "Fanchon the Cricket" is among the finer traditions of the American stage.

A rare playbill of November 18th, 1858,<sup>9</sup> shows John in the minor part of Poisson of the Comédie Française in John Oxenford's "Adrienne the Actress," with Miss Avonia Jones, guest star, as Adrienne Lecouvreur. He likewise figured in the afterpiece of the same evening, a farce entitled "Jenny Lind." Both personally and as an actor he became popular in Richmond. Socially, actors were then received more freely in the South than in the North; and John Booth was a social being. He was back again for the season of 1859-1860, which opened on September 6th, and in the

<sup>8</sup> From the original at The Players and here printed for the first time by special permission.

<sup>9</sup> Owned by Mr. Irving Greentree of Richmond.

city directory for 1860 his address, under the name of Booth, is given as the Powhatan Hotel. Partner with Kunkel in management was John T. Ford, who since 1854 had been directing the Holliday Street Theatre in Baltimore, and who had known John from childhood.

George Crutchfield, one of those who often saw John play and who knew him outside of the theater, wrote of him, a half-century later, as "a man of high character & sociable disposition, & liked by every one with whom he associated." Though friends "joked him about his bow-legs," said Crutchfield, he was considered "very handsome," and in winter his fur-trimmed overcoat was a common sight on Richmond's streets.<sup>10</sup>

In his fascinating "The End of an Era," John S. Wise refers to Booth as he was at this time and as he seemed to Wise's older brother Jennings, who had been in the diplomatic service at Berlin and Paris.

One night we attended the play of "East Lynne" at the old Richmond Theatre. The performance was poor enough, to be sure, to a young man fresh from Paris, but I thought it was great. On our way home, he remarked that the only performer of merit in the caste [*sic*] was the young fellow, John Wilkes Booth. In him, he said, there was the making of a good actor. The criticism made an impression upon me, who remembered the man and the name.

After John Brown's raid, while Brown and those captured with him were in prison at Charlestown and while there was talk on the one side of a possible jail delivery and on the other of a possible lynching, Governor Wise called out troops to guard the captives. The separate company of Richmond Grays was ordered to entrain by the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac, which left the town on the street level at a point on Broad Street not far from the Marshall Theatre. Just as the special train was about ready to start, John Booth came out of the theater and begged to go along. He was informed that the train was strictly for military use, but so earnestly did he plead that Capt. Louis J. Bossieux at last consented and a uniform was issued to him. Inasmuch as he

<sup>10</sup> The original letter, dated July 5, 1909, is in the Valentine Museum at Richmond.

was familiar with military drill, he fitted easily into the ranks.<sup>11</sup> From Charlestown a correspondent of the *Richmond Enquirer* reported:

The military aspect of the town yesterday was very gay, the weather being fine, and the troops availing themselves of the opportunity of making an exploration of the streets and alleys, many going beyond the suburbs. The Richmond Grays and Company F, which seem to vie with each other in the handsome appearance they present, reminded one of uncaged birds, so wild and gleesome they appear. Amongst them I notice Mr. J. Wilkes Booth, a son of Junius Brutus Booth, who, though not a member, as soon as he heard the tap of the drum, threw down the sock and buskin, and shouldered his musket and marched with the Grays to the reported scene of deadly conflict.<sup>12</sup>

On December 2nd John Brown was led out to die. The rope was adjusted—and then, said the Associated Press dispatch, “the soldiers marched and countermarched, and took their position as if an enemy was in sight. Nearly ten minutes was thus occupied, the prisoner standing meanwhile. Mr. Avis [the jailer] inquired if he was not tired. Brown replied, ‘No; but don’t keep me waiting longer than necessary.’

“At fifteen minutes past eleven the trap fell. A slight grasping of the hands and twitching of the muscles was visible, and then all was quiet.”

As the trap was sprung, a private of the Richmond Grays was seen to turn ghastly pale. Those near him inquired whether he felt ill and he answered that he would like a stiff drink of whisky. It was John Booth, the young actor to whom mimic death was a common sight, who had been thus affected by the sorry reality.

After his second season at Richmond, John strikes out upon that meteoric course along which we trace him at first vaguely but soon with some degree of clearness. He sets forth as a traveling star, beginning in the South. For a time he is at Montgomery, Alabama.

<sup>11</sup> Account of George W. Libby, a member of the Grays (Weddell, “Richmond, Virginia, in Old Prints”; p. 203). Crutchfield, a member of the Light Infantry Blues, wrote: “He [Booth] was in the cast for that night’s play & when asked how Kunkle was going to get along without him, replied ‘that he didn’t know and didn’t care.’”

<sup>12</sup> Nov. 28, 1859; p. 2.

Wherever he goes, we are likely to hear of something sensational in connection with him; nor are these incidents the creations of press agents, for the press agent is as yet a bird unknown. At Columbus, Georgia, he is "accidentally shot" and cannot appear as Hamlet, J. W. Albaugh taking his place. At Albany, New York (where on February 11th, 1861, he opens his first engagement), while appearing as Pescara in Sheil's "The Apostate," he in some way strikes upon his dagger's point, which enters his right armpit, inflicting a bloody and painful wound. On the night when the Lincolns are visiting the city, he reappears in the same rôle but his right arm is bound to his side and he fences like a demon with his left.<sup>13</sup> On April 25th his third and final engagement in Albany meets a sudden end. He is at this time supported by Henrietta Irving, a member of the stock at the Gayety, who rushes into his room at Stanwix Hall and cuts his face with a dirk, then stabs herself, though by no means fatally. The cause is said to have been "disappointed affection, or some little affair of that sort."<sup>14</sup>

During the following season he roams widely. At the end of November he is at Detroit, whence he proceeds to successful engagements at Cincinnati, Louisville, Pittsburg, St. Louis, Chicago. Then on his native heath of Baltimore, at Ford's Holliday Street Theatre, he is acclaimed for his "incomparable impersonation" of Richard III and saluted as "an actor of undoubted ability and genius," for whom is predicted a most brilliant future.<sup>15</sup>

In March 1862 New York saw the reopening of Wallack's old theater (485 Broadway, near Broome Street) as Mary Provost's. It had been refurbished and Miss Provost, a New York favorite, was nominally its manager. "Miss Provost, we take pleasure in announcing, has had it washed," said the *World*. "She has, moreover, signalized her opening attempt at New-York management by engaging a star of real magnitude, and singular though fitful brilliancy." The star was none other than John Booth, whose

<sup>13</sup> *Spirit of the Times*, Nov. 3, 1860; p. 144. Phelps, "Players of a Century"; pp. 324-326.

<sup>14</sup> She became the wife of Edward Eddy and continued upon the stage for a number of years. This scene has been represented as occurring at Madison, Indiana, yet an item in the *Madison Courier* for May 11 (p. 3) expressly places it in Albany.

<sup>15</sup> *Spirit of the Times*, Mar. 1, 1862; p. 413.



reception in what New York's critics even then termed "the provinces" had been noted in managerial offices.

He opened on the 17th in "Richard III" to a house so crowded that the *Times'* reviewer was unable to get a seat. During the remainder of the week the theater was packed with enthusiastic audiences. It was noted that John strongly resembled Edwin but was stouter in build and stronger of voice, and the *Sunday Mercury* concluded that "under intelligent tutelage" he would make a better actor than his distinguished brother. Other attractions in New York were Lester Wallack; opera at the Academy of Music, with Miss Kellogg, Mme. Strakosch, and Brignoli; Gottschalk and Carlotta Patti in joint recital at Niblo's Saloon; Commodore Nutt ("the \$30,000 Nutt") at Barnum's—but John held his own against them all and was retained for two weeks more. His support was excellent.

One night during this engagement, Booth as Richard seemed in the combat with E. L. Tilton as Richmond to become oblivious of his surroundings. He sprang at Tilton, who fought back desperately while the audience, sensing the nature of the duel, watched eagerly without applause. Tilton was at last driven over the footlights amid the shrieks of the ladies and tumbled into the orchestra pit, dislocating his right shoulder. To a salvo of cheers he regained the stage and the curtain was rung down, the colloquy between Richard and Derby being omitted.

The *Times* considered John a highly valuable addition to the limited roster of tragedians, adding "We cannot name a better Richard." The *Spirit of the Times* thought him immensely effective as Pescara, admirable as Charles de Moor; "an actor of genius and talent, with the capacity of becoming very great in the more tempestuous sort of tragedy and melodrama." The *World* decided that his merits had justified his hearty welcome, that his faults were such as would readily yield to experience and training.

In May he was at the Boston Museum for two weeks (from the 12th to the 24th), and the management proclaimed that the extraordinary furore inspired by this young artist had never been equaled by any other Museum star. He enlisted, said the *Transcript*, "the deep interest of our oldest and most intelligent

theatre-goers" and "gave promise of attaining a foremost position." In a lengthy analysis of the relative merits of John and Edwin, the critic of the *Post* had this to say:

Edwin has more poetry, John Wilkes more passion; Edwin has more melody of movement and utterance, John Wilkes more energy and animation; Edwin is more correct, John Wilkes more spontaneous; Edwin is more Shakespearean, John Wilkes more melo-dramatic; and in a word, Edwin is a better Hamlet, John Wilkes a better Richard III.

During the next season he returned to the Museum for four weeks (January 19th to February 14th, 1863). He had now added to his repertoire, appearing not only as Fabien and Louis in "The Corsican Brothers" but also in the comedy rôles of Alfred Evelyn in Bulwer's "Money" and of Petruchio in "Katherine and Petruchio." He seems to have made a special impression in "Richard III" and as Raphael in "The Marble Heart," but he played to full houses throughout and the *Transcript* characterized the whole engagement as "truly extraordinary." In his support were Kate Reignolds, Emily Mestayer, and William Whalley.

Edwin, who had been married to Mary Devlin and had set up a home of his own at Dorchester, wrote to his friend Richard Henry Stoddard:

I saw last night—for the first time—my brother act; he played Pescara—a bloody villain of the deepest red, you know, an *admiral* of the red, as 'twas, and he presented him—not underdone, but rare enough for the most fastidious "beef-eater"; Jno. Bull himself Esquire never looked more savagely at us poor "mudsills" than did J. Wilkes, himself, Esquire, settle the accounts of last evening. Yet I am happy to state that he is full of the true grit—he has stuff enough in him to make good suits for a dozen such player-folk as we are cursed with; and when time and study round his rough edges he'll bid them all "stand apart." . . .<sup>16</sup>

John's engagement at the Museum might, the *Transcript* judged, have been "continued with profit to the management for a month to come at least," but he was booked to appear in Philadelphia at the Arch Street Theatre, of which Mrs. John Drew was now lessee. He would have opened there on February 23rd, but on

<sup>16</sup> As quoted in Otis Skinner's "The Last Tragedian"; p. 71. Copyright, 1939, by Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc. Used by permission of the publishers.

the 21st Mary Devlin had passed away. Heading the playbill for the 23rd, a "Card to the Public" stated that John had "felt the necessity imperative upon him to join his afflicted Brother." He and Adam Badeau had been witnesses at the marriage in New York on July 7th, 1860.

He opened on March 2nd, and continued for two weeks. In his support Mrs. Drew took such parts as Portia, Queen Gertrude ("Hamlet"), Queen Elizabeth ("Richard III"), and Lady Macbeth. "... There is," said the *Press*, "no reason why he should not become a great actor." Fastidious playgoers, it declared, were convinced that "he possesses genius of a high order, which needs cultivation and development." Of his Richard the *North American* noted that "every nerve quivers with the passion which his words give vent to; crime heaped on crime only seems to afford fresh scope for his determined will—whilst the climax of the play, the fight between 'Richard' and 'Richmond,' was never given with such desperate energy." Observing that the resemblance between Edwin and John "is very marked," the *Press* added:

Without having Edwin's culture and grace, and without that glittering eye, . . . Mr. Booth has far more action, more life, and, we are inclined to think, more natural genius. He does not play "Richard III" as well as Edwin, but he plays some parts of it in a manner that we do not think Edwin can ever equal. His last act, and particularly his dying scene, is a piece of acting that few actors can rival, and is far above the capacity of Edwin Booth.

At twenty-four, John was welcomed as "a rising man" to the stage of Philadelphia.

It should be obvious that this young player—not only sought by managers as "good box-office" but greeted in such fashion by the press of the leading theatrical centers of the East and acclaimed by seasoned patrons of the drama in an era of gifted actors—was not, as has been misrepresented, either a foolish tyro or an empty swashbuckler. Indeed, the New York *Herald* specified that he was "most mature, his self-possession extraordinary"; the *Times*, that he was "intellectually impressive"; and in Philadelphia the *North American* added a good word for the "poetic spirit" of his Raphael. In Boston he made the greatest hit of any actor of his time. At twenty-five, after but a half-dozen years on

the stage, he had a répertoire of at least a score of leading parts, nine of them Shakespearean—evidence that he could not have been exactly lazy.

Among the people of the theater his ability was generously recognized. Mrs. Gilbert considered him "the most perfect Romeo, the finest I ever saw." To W. J. Ferguson he was "a marvelously clever and amusing demigod." "We all respected Booth because he was a good actor," said Helen Truman (a member of Ford's stock company at Washington). "As an actor," maintained Sir Charles Wyndham, "the natural endowment of John Wilkes Booth was of the highest. His original gift was greater than that of his wonderful brother, Edwin." Clara Morris ranked him highly, as did Kate Reynolds. All of these persons had appeared with him. "Doubtless," said John T. Ford, "he would have made the greatest actor of his time had he lived." Ford had paid him \$700 a week—a high figure for those days—because he thought him worth it. John's terms to Ben De Bar of St. Louis were: "Share after \$140 per night, and benefit each week."

His personal advantages for his profession were many. He was of medium height (a trifle short, perhaps, for heroic characters but somewhat taller than Edwin), well-knit and well-proportioned—a gymnast, a swordsman who could take on two opponents at once and disarm both. His finely molded head, with its classic features, was surmounted by a profusion of wavy jet-black hair, parted at the back (in a fashion of the period) and brought up over the ears. The large, expressive hazel eyes were deeply set under heavy lids, and the mobile face, with its olive skin, wore in repose (as we still see it in photographs) a contemplative look that gives small hint of the vivacity, the gayety, the love of fun and practical joking with which those who knew him were well acquainted. Usually the mouth was largely hidden by a thick mustache that in part concealed the resemblance to Edwin.

Offstage, John Booth seems to have been pretty generally regarded as a charming fellow, simple and direct in nature, gracious and kindly in manner, a good listener, quite devoid of petty vanity. He frankly spoke of himself as lacking in flexibility and ease, and jested about his rather large hands, broadened by exercise. When a group of actors in Cincinnati praised him for his



Hamlet, he quickly dissented with "No! no, no! there's one Hamlet to my mind, that's my brother Edwin. You see, between ourselves, he *is* Hamlet, melancholy and all!" His sister informs us that he had a pleasantly deferential air toward his elders and would give to bores and nuisances a patient ear. Under Edwin's roof in New York, Gen. Adam Badeau, who twice found refuge there (once when wounded and again after an attack of camp-fever), thought John—whom he had never seen on the stage—"very captivating." John, wrote his friend and manager John T. Ford, "was a peculiarly fascinating man to all who knew him well."

Sir Charles Wyndham in an interview told of his meeting with John Booth in 1863:

My first part was Osric in "Hamlet." During my introductory rehearsal I wandered about the stage and finally chose an advantageous position at a little table where I could command a good view of the proceedings. John Wilkes noticed me there and smiled. A few minutes later the stage manager caught sight of me and rushed up in a great state of mind. It seemed that I had been sitting at the star's table, whereas my proper place was far back in the wings. I apologized, of course, but Booth didn't seem to mind. He spoke pleasantly to me and we spent some minutes in conversation.

The courtesy and kindliness shown me by John Wilkes made way for friendship between us, and we frequently were together after the play. He was a most charming fellow, off the stage as well as on, a man of flashing wit and magnetic manner. He was one of the best *raconteurs* to whom I have ever listened.<sup>17</sup>

When at rehearsal of a combat his forehead was accidentally gashed and his eyebrow cut through by an actor named McCollom, John made nothing of the injury, waved aside apologies. In the profession he was open-handed with his money, liberal with his time, frequently appearing at benefit performances for others. "The late Mrs. G. H. Gilbert, who had acted with him, entertained a high opinion of him—a fact which speaks much for his good qualities. McCullough liked him. So did John S. Clarke. So did the late Edwin Varrey, a fine actor and one of the best of

<sup>17</sup> Wyndham, who had been graduated in medicine from Dublin University, came to the United States in 1862 and was appointed military surgeon in the Federal army. He had some experience in amateur theatricals.

men"—thus William Winter in 1915. An exception was Forrest, then no longer in his prime and unfortunately envious of Edwin Booth's increasing fame.

At a later date John would have been classed by some as a *matinée* idol, for ladies wrote him scented notes in plenty and bought the *carte-de-visite* photographs of him that, with the portraits of other stage favorites, were to be had in many shops. To Clara Morris, who watched him as he tore the signatures from a pile of unread *billets doux*, he lightly said, "They are harmless now, little one; their sting lies in the tail." Catherine Reynolds-Winslow (Kate Reynolds), who played leads with him at the Boston Museum, said in her "Yesterdays with Actors": "The stage door was always blocked with silly women waiting to catch a glimpse, as he passed, of his superb face and figure." Women of the profession spoke of him fondly in after years. "He was very handsome, most lovable and lovely"—thus Mrs. Anne Gilbert. "John Wilkes Booth was a gentleman"—so insisted Jennie Gourlay (Mrs. Robert Struthers) after half a century—"a high-minded, cultured man. They tried hard to make him out a barroom loafer, though." Clara Morris epitomized him as "so bright, so gay, so kind."

Naturally he had faults both as actor and as individual. At various times the reviewers mildly disapproved of his elocution. "Like Edwin," said one, "he occasionally minces his words, and uses quaint pronunciation"—which at least put him in good company. One thought his voice husky while another found it low and rich but complained that he forced it overmuch, and a third spoke of its "grand melody." A notice referred in one breath to his soliloquies in "Richard III" as "of doubtful propriety in artistic view," yet allowed in the next that "it is Gloster all over"—that John has "fewer defects, to my mind, than any actor I have seen in the part for many years." His Hamlet was said to be less consistently excellent than his Richard, the scenes of intense mood and hurried action far surpassing those of philosophic introspection—something quite probable in so young a man. "Mr. Booth," a critique ran, "seems to me too energetic, too positive, earthly, real and tangible for Hamlet; yet I have seen artists of great repute, who were all these in greater degrees."

More frequently than for anything else he was censured for extravagances—for boisterousness, and in general for what William Winter called “violent demeanor.” His was the kind of intensity that had made Edmund Kean famous. We read of the last act of his Richard as “a tornado of rapid execution, hurrying the spectator along, with resistless power.” We happen upon allusions to his “Mephistophelian sneer” and “demoniac glare” that “fairly curdle the blood.” It was a sort of thing in which theatrical audiences had long delighted, and John Booth was fitted to sustain it. “He added,” John T. Ford said, “a fine physical organization to his marvelous mental powers.”

But there were those who thought him sometimes too gory and too acrobatic for their taste—and taste was gradually shifting away from drama like Schiller’s “Robbers,” which has been described as “bloody enough to satisfy the appetite of a cannibal.” “In the scene in ‘Macbeth’ where he entered the den of the witches,” J. T. Ford related, “Booth would not content himself with the usual steps to reach the stage, but had a ledge of rocks some ten or twelve feet high erected in their stead, down which he sprang upon the stage.” This leap—nearly from the top of the scene—he made with apparent ease, but it was considered unbecomingly agile in the Thane of Glamis and wholly beside the mark. Kate Reynolds wrote:

He told me that he generally slept smothered in steak or oysters to cure his own bruises after Richard the Third, because he necessarily got as good as he gave—in fact more, for though an excellent swordsman, in his blind passion he constantly cut himself. How he threw me about! once even knocked me down, picking me up again with a regret as quick as his dramatic impulse had been vehement. . . .

. . . In the last scene of Romeo and Juliet, one night, I vividly recall how the buttons on his cuff caught my hair, and in trying to tear them out he trod on my dress and rent it so as to make it utterly useless afterward; and in his last struggle literally shook me out of my shoes! The curtain fell on Romeo with a sprained thumb, a good deal of hair on his sleeve, Juliet in rags and two white satin shoes lying in the corner of the stage!

John’s artistic faults were of course due in part to a lack of early education, proper dramatic schooling, adequate discipline, and extended apprenticeship. At Richmond the company seems to

have included no players from whose style he could derive any particular instruction, and dramatic criticism in the local press was negligible. From Richmond he went out prematurely as a star, going first to the South, where, as Asia Booth says, not only were his successes magnified but "even his errors were extolled." Edwin helped build the ladder by which he rose from "Ethiopian" banjo-strummer to the "Prince of Players." He fought his fight against defects of will and taints of blood. "Much of my life's struggle," he said, "has been with myself, and the pains I have endured in overcoming and correcting the evils of my untrained disposition have been very great." It seemed that John's ladder was obligingly let down from the clouds; he climbed with reckless ease but without control or purpose. His sister assures us that he yearned for criticism, no matter how severe, if just. Possibly so. It does not appear, however, that he sought to profit by the criticisms he received, and not all of them could have been unjust.

Growing more vehement, more headstrong, he became as extravagant off the stage as he often was upon it. "He was ever spoiled and petted, and left to his unrestrained will," Kate Reignolds regretfully sets down. "He succeeded in gaining position by flashes of genius, and the necessity of ordinary study had not been borne in upon him. No life could have been worse for such a character than that of an actor."<sup>18</sup>

One who admired him and saw in him great potentialities said: "Let us hope that he will subside, by degrees, into his proper self, and become the fine intellectual artist he has evidently the gifts to be."

<sup>18</sup> "Yesterdays with Actors"; p. 142.



## Five . . . "A TURN TOWARDS THE EVIL"

IT was in April 1863 that John Booth played his first engagement in the Washington City with whose name his own was to be so darkly united. In Philadelphia, as in Boston and New York, a devoted following waited eagerly to hail his return. Audiences were keener, heartier, more demonstrative then than now; and probably no other young actor had ever left behind him more good will among American playgoers. At his benefits they stood in the aisles (for there were no ordinances about such matters, and house rules were lax). After the play they would argue with one another as to whether John or Edwin were the greater; and they were likely to determine that whereas Edwin might be Hamlet, John equally was Gloster.

So the playbills of Grover's Theatre for Saturday, April 11th, 1863, broke into a great flourish of display type to herald the advent of "The Pride of the American People, The Youngest Tragedian In The World! Who Is Entitled To Be Denominated A Star of the First Magnitude!" The play was "Richard III," with Susan Denin as Queen Elizabeth and J. M. Ward as Richmond. Historians of the National Theatre (Grover's) state not only that a "very large and fashionable audience" was present but that President Lincoln was there, with Governor Oliver P. Morton of Indiana as his guest.<sup>1</sup> As announced, the engagement was for seven nights only, the repertoire for the ensuing week comprising "The Marble Heart," "Hamlet," "The Lady of Lyons," "Money," "The Merchant of Venice" (with "The Taming of the Shrew" as an afterpiece).

<sup>1</sup> Hunter and Polkinhorn, "A Record of Fifty Years"; p. 47.

It was at that time that Charles Wyndham (afterward Sir Charles, and a rare comedian), who was enjoying an interlude of acting before returning to his post as army surgeon, struck up a friendship with Booth, who was one year his junior. After a lifetime's experience of the stage, he said decisively of John:<sup>2</sup>

A marvellous man. He was one of the few to whom that ill-used term of genius might be applied with perfect truth. His dramatic powers were of the best. They were untutored, untrained. He lacked the quality of the student that Edwin possessed, but the artist was there.

From Wyndham we learn that John's conception of Hamlet as a mad prince throughout was "fiery" and "convincing."

Booth's reception was so encouraging that he decided to lease the Washington Theatre (which perpetually was changing managers and at this time was dark) and present his own "new and superior" company. John T. Ford's theater, on the east side of Tenth Street, between E and F, had been destroyed by fire on December 30th, 1862, and the new building had not yet been completed, else John might have appeared there. Alice Grey and E. H. Brink headed the support. Of John's performance as Richard on the opening night, the *Intelligencer* said: "The effect produced upon the audience was absolutely startling and bordered nearly upon the terrible."<sup>3</sup> The repertoire for the two weeks (April 27th to May 9th) included Sheil's "The Apostate," Selby's "The Marble Heart," "Romeo and Juliet," "The Corsican Brothers," and "Macbeth"; and two nights were relinquished to J. Grau's Italian-opera troupe.

"J. W. Booth," the *Intelligencer* descanted, "has that which is the grand constituent of all truly great acting, intensity." It said that he played "not from stage rule, but from his soul, and his soul is inspired with genius."

In the autumn—from Monday, November 2nd to Saturday, November 14th—he was at Ford's New Theatre, which had been opened on August 26th with considerable fanfare and the pious hope that it might become "the accepted home of the Muses in Washington." Announced as "the gifted Tragedian" and "the

<sup>2</sup> New York *Herald*, June 27, 1909.

<sup>3</sup> April 28; p. 1.

youngest 'Star' Actor in the World," he played a two weeks' engagement in a series of his best parts, backed by Ford's admirable stock company. On the 9th, the President and Mrs. Lincoln took four guests, including Nicolay and Hay, in a box party to see "The Marble Heart," which the somewhat finical Hay characterized as "rather tame than otherwise." Whatever else might have been said of John Booth as an actor, few probably would have elected to call him "tame."

On March 14th, 1864, he opened in New Orleans at the St. Charles (the "Old Drury") in his bravura part of Richard. The *Picayune's* reviewer found he exhibited "that subtlety which was so prominent in Gloster" and that "in the Tent scene, on waking from his horrible dream, his acting was remarkably fine." ("We cannot imagine a more terrible picture of phrenzied guilt.") The *True Delta's* critic felt that "if his powerful delineation of the 'bloody-minded Gloster' is to be taken as a sample of his ability, then we cheerfully add our mite of admiration to the general praise and commendation his efforts have met wherever he has appeared." He continued:

In *physique*, Mr. Booth is greatly the superior of his brother Edwin, being a much handsomer and larger man, and in no other particular that we could discern last night is he at all inferior to that eminent and much admired actor. . . . In the tent scene and on the ensanguined field of Bosworth, he was absolutely horrifying, and while looking at him we could well conceive of the truth of the story that is told of Lord Byron, who, as the chronicler tells us, was so overcome by Kean's acting of Sir Giles Overreach as to faint away in his box.

As the usage was in New Orleans, Booth played on Sunday nights, and this was additionally taxing. Excepting March 26th and 27th, he appeared nightly through April 3rd. In its final notice the *Picayune* said:

Actors are not over prone to praise each other, but we have heard a good actor say that J. Wilkes Booth had quite as decided theatrical talent as any member of his talented family. It is a matter of regret that a physical disability (we trust temporary) prevented his engagement from being so gratifying to himself or to his friends as was desirable, and we look for his return here next season under more favorable auspices.

The "disability" was a persistent bronchial hoarseness that

seems to have made his utterance labored and occasionally indistinct. (Blurred and husky speech was not yet esteemed a virtue on the American stage.)

At Boston, where on April 25th John opened his third Museum engagement, the *Transcript* of the 27th reported:

Mr. Booth played the part of "Evelyn" at the Museum last evening, with a tact, grace and appreciation of the character such as few but himself can exhibit upon the stage, the only drawback being the cold which restrains his voice. The company, too, put their best feet foremost, and the large audience was kept in excellent humor throughout the evening.

The *Post* of the 28th said:

Crowded houses have thus far attended the performances of J. Wilkes Booth and this notwithstanding the prevalence of a severe storm from the very commencement of his engagement. Seats are in demand for a week ahead, and there is every indication that his present visit to Boston will be crowned with even greater success than any heretofore made.

We hear no more of the cold, and the engagement (which the *Transcript* of May 14th described as "very successful") ran to five weeks, giving "much satisfaction to the admirers of this gifted young actor." It has been gratuitously stated that John Booth retired from the stage because of the sudden loss of both his voice and his popularity. This is obviously contradicted by the evidence we have.

In the diary of Attorney-General Edward Bates<sup>4</sup> is preserved a "sharp hit" attributed to Julia Ward Howe, who had just arrived from Boston (where John was in the fourth week of his engagement) and was giving a course of lectures in Washington. The story was that Mrs. Howe said to Charles Sumner:

"Mr. Sumner, have you heard young Booth yet? He's a man of fine talents and noble hopes in his profession."

"Why, n-no, madam," Sumner replied. "I long since ceased to take any interest in *individuals*."

Mrs. Howe's retort was: "You have made great progress, sir. God has not yet gone so far—at least according to the last accounts!"

<sup>4</sup>Under the entry for Thursday, May 20, 1864.



On Friday, November 25th, 1864, occurred what was probably the most brilliant theatrical affair New York had known up to that time. This was the second benefit in aid of a fund for a statue of Shakespeare in the Central Park, where the bronze by J. Q. A. Ward was placed at the lower end of the Mall in 1872. The performance was of "Julius Cæsar" and was given at the Winter Garden, then managed by William Stuart. The date was noteworthy in more ways than one. It was Evacuation Day, anniversary of the day in 1786 when the British quit New York—a day now largely forgotten but still remembered in 1864. On that night Confederate agents attempted to fire New York. On that night the three Booths—Junius II, Edwin, and John—appeared together for the only time in their lives. On the next evening, at the same theater, Edwin began his famous run of one hundred nights as Hamlet.

For this "Julius Cæsar," prices were advanced to \$5 for the orchestra, \$1.50 for the parquet and orchestra circle, \$1 for the family circle—figures so high in those days that Stuart thought it best to remind his public that "in addition to the value they receive in intellectual enjoyment, they are contributing to a great national work, and not to the personal advantage of any individual." The *World* of the 28th said: "The house was packed full, and the treasurer obtained the handsome sum of nearly four thousand dollars (so reported) for the monument fund."

"The audience," declared the *Times* of the 26th, "was fairly carried by storm from the first entrance of the three brothers side by side in their respective parts. Brutus [Edwin] was individualized with great force and distinctness—Cassius [Junius II] was brought out equally well—and if there was less of real personality given to Mark Anthony [John], the fault was rather in the part than in the actor."

Mary Ann Booth was there, a happy witness of this unique conjunction; and Asia was there, fancying that Edwin "trembled a little for his own laurels" and hearing a Southern voice delightedly exclaim, "Our Wilkes looks like a young god!" At the beginning of the second act—the scene in Brutus' orchard—the cry of "Fire!" was raised. A panic seemed imminent, but Edwin,

coming down to the footlights, gave assurance that there was no danger, that the theater was not on fire. The performance was resumed and only a few persons left the house.

The alarm had come from the adjoining Lafarge House. Incendiaries sent by Confederate representatives in Canada endeavored to start fires in Barnum's Museum and in a number of hotels, where a mixture of turpentine and phosphorus was put in mattresses and bedclothes. In a few instances, especially at the St. Nicholas, considerable damage was done, but not at the Lafarge. One of the incendiaries, Robert Kennedy, was later arrested and hanged. In his confession he stated that he was a Confederate prisoner who had escaped from Johnson's Island (in Lake Erie) to Canada, that eight men were employed for firing the city. It was to have been done on the night of the Presidential election but the phosphorus was not ready. The intention was, he said, to destroy property, although everybody was of course aware that lives might be lost. "We wanted to let the people of the North understand that there are two sides to this war, and they can't be rolling in wealth and comfort while we at the South are bearing all the hardships and privations." The combustible material was defective and the work was botched—otherwise there might have been what Kennedy styled "a huge joke on the fire department."

John's appearance in this special performance of "Julius Cæsar" was his last upon the New York stage. On November 9th he had established headquarters at the National Hotel in Washington, where with intervals of absence—usually for a few days, sometimes for nearly a month—he continued to stay. At the "adieu benefit" of the "celebrated Tragic Artiste" Miss Avonia Jones on January 20th, 1865, at Grover's, John, advertised as "the Favorite Tragedian," played Romeo to the lady's Juliet. On March 18th, 1865, when "The Apostate" was given for the benefit of his friend John McCullough, he was billed as "The Eminent Young American Tragedian" who would "render his Great Character of Pescara!" Miss Alice Grey was the Florinda, McCullough the Hemeya, and Charles B. Bishop the Caleb Scrimmidge.

Booth agreed to play for the benefit of Harry Ford, John T. Ford's brother and treasurer of Ford's Theatre—but he never did.

He appeared but once more on any stage, and then in a new rôle, more startling than Pescara or Richard. He did not retire from the stage; he was drawn away from it. His professional life no longer constrained him as it had done. Though managers sought him, other interests claimed him. He must have disregarded or broken a promise to go to Chicago, for on Christmas Day of 1864 J. H. McVicker of McVicker's Theatre wrote him:

What do you say to filling three weeks with me, May 29th? I have not yet filled your time in January, and see no chance of doing so with an attraction equal to yourself. There are plenty of little fish but I don't want them if I can help it. So, if you can come then, come at the above date.

John did not go in May, either—and there was reason why.

Among his concerns had been the investment of some of his earnings. In December 1863 or January 1864 he had begun to acquire land in the oil region of Pennsylvania. He added to his holdings until by September 1864 he had (according to Joseph H. Simonds, who had become his agent) invested \$6,000. Those who wish may find in P. T. Barnum's "Humbugs of the World" contemporary sidelights on the trickery and fraud that almost from its inception were associated with the "oil business." While "Petroleumania" was at its height, newspapers were flooded with advertisements, most of them questionable, of oil companies with all sorts of irrelevant names and all kinds of fictitious claims. John conveyed the impression that his undertakings in oil were highly profitable. Asia had that idea, and John T. Ford said: "He had given out that he had made a great deal of money in oil speculation, and I suppose he had, for he showed me a pamphlet—a sort of prospectus of oil property for sale—in which it was mentioned that the land adjoined the very successful property of J. Wilkes Booth."<sup>5</sup> Simonds admitted on the witness stand, however, that Booth never realized a dollar from properties in the oil region. His speculations, the agent said, were a total loss. He also purchased some real estate in Boston.<sup>6</sup>

In November 1864 he was down in Charles County, Lower

<sup>5</sup> In an interview with Col. Frank A. Burr. See the *Philadelphia Press*, Dec. 4, 1881; pp. 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> See Poore's report, "The Conspiracy Trial"; vol. i, pp. 39-42.



Maryland, where he called on Dr. William Queen, who lived four or five miles south of Bryantown, and to whom he presented a letter of introduction from one P. C. Martin, a Baltimore liquor dealer. Martin had left Baltimore for Montreal, where he combined note-shaving with the running of supplies through the Federal blockade. Booth inquired about farm properties in Charles County; and from what he said of his tidy profits in oil, it was devoutly hoped that he would put his surplus cash into acreage there. Slavery was ended, labor was hard to get, and land-owners were willing to dispose of parcels at from \$50 to as low as \$5 an acre.

At Bryantown church he was casually introduced to Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, who lived on the road from Bryantown to Queen's and at whose house he passed a night. There was a surfeit of doctors thereabouts, and Mudd, though he had a small practice, devoted most of his time to farming. Booth seems to have made promises to Mudd and to a Dr. W. T. Bowman, but it does not appear that he actually bought any land. He did buy from a neighbor of Mudd's a dark-bay saddle horse, blind of one eye.

In Washington he kept as many as three saddle horses at livery stables, the charge being a dollar a day for each horse. The animals were usually at the disposal of friends. Behind Ford's Theatre was a typical Washington "public" alley, about forty feet wide, opening on F Street. Negro families lived on this alley, and there were also stables, one of which Booth rented from a Mrs. Davis. He had this fitted up with two stalls and kept in it first a saddle horse, later a driving horse and a buggy. He paid Burroughs (known as "Peanuts"), the stage doorman, to feed and clean the horse, and Edman Spangler,<sup>7</sup> a scene shifter and assistant carpenter, to do odd jobs, such as hitching up. All the employees of the theater knew him and he had access to the building by all the entrances, coming and going as he wished—passing behind the scenes, into the greenroom, anywhere.

His mail was addressed to the office, where he would call for it each morning when he was in town. John T. Ford, who ordinarily came down from Baltimore three times a week, said that

<sup>7</sup> Spangler's name has almost invariably been given as Edward, but that appears to be incorrect. Spangler was a Pennsylvania "Dutchman," originally from York.



he was used to seeing John in or near the theater at some hour during the day. Nearly everybody about the place liked him. "He had such a winning way," said one of them afterward.

It was but a short walk to Ford's from the National Hotel. This was one of Washington's better hostelries and, being handy to the Capitol, was the home of numerous Solons and their families. Its bar was approved, and upholstered ladies *à la dernière mode*, with their intricate coiffures, haunted its Victorian parlors. Favored by Southerners before the war, it was still a resort of Baltimoreans. Its "hops" were well known and largely attended, and John Booth, one of its notable guests, was often present at these social events. It was said that now and then at *soirées* he was prevailed upon to recite from the copious stores of verse he had industriously memorized in his nonage.

Among those residing at the National were the Hales of New Hampshire. John P. Hale, a senator from that state, had twice been the Free Soil party's nominee for the Presidency, and against him Foote of Mississippi, an ardent duelist, had vented spleen in these words:

I invite him to Mississippi and will tell him beforehand, in all honesty, that he could not go ten miles into the interior before he would grace one of the tallest trees of the forest with a rope around his neck, with the approbation of every honest and patriotic citizen; and that, if necessary, I should myself assist in the operation.

Hale should be remembered for his plea in the case of the fugitive Shadrach (arrested in Boston in 1851), in which he said: "The mere breath of the slave-catcher's mouth turns a man into another man's chattel! Suppose John De Bree had said that he owned the moon, or the stars, or had an exclusive right to the sunshine, would you find it so by your verdict? But, gentlemen, the stars shall fade and fall from heaven; the moon shall grow old and decay; the heavens themselves shall pass away as a scroll—but the soul of the despised Shadrach shall live on with the life of God himself! I wonder if John De Bree will say he owns him *then!*" John Booth knew the Hales, who were described in the *New York Tribune* as "remarkable for culture, intellect, and every form of attractiveness." The Misses Hale—Lucy Lambert and Elizabeth, called Lizzie or Bessie—were much in his company at the hotel,

and the town often saw him as their escort. He was indeed, as John T. Ford wrote, "caressed and flattered by the best people of Washington."

Stage people were naturally among his friends—McCullough, whose stopping place was always the National and whom he highly regarded as actor and man; John Matthews of Ford's stock company; E. A. Emerson, also of Ford's—in fact, he seems to have been on good terms with them all. He had other acquaintances, too. In October 1864 the Surratts came to Washington. Mary E. Surratt, a personable widow of forty-five who had managed a farm and a village inn at Surrattsville in Prince George's County (Lower Maryland), rented the place to John M. Lloyd and opened a boarding-house in the dwelling at 541 H Street.<sup>8</sup> In addition to Miss Anna Surratt and her brother John (then about twenty-one), the regular household consisted of several boarders, including a Miss Honora Fitzpatrick and one Louis J. Weichmann,<sup>9</sup> a clerk in the office of the commissary-general of prisoners. Transients were also received at Mrs. Surratt's convenience. Booth met John Surratt and after that he was a frequent caller at the Surratt home. He seems to have been generous with theater tickets, and Miss Surratt and Miss Fitzpatrick each bought a photograph of him at a "Daguerrean gallery." The suggestion, made by inventive writers, of a "romance" between Mrs. Surratt and Booth is quite absurd. John Surratt wrote in a letter to a New York cousin:

I have just taken a peep in the parlor. Would you like to know what I saw there? Well, Ma was sitting on the sofa, nodding first to one chair, then to another, next the piano. Anna sitting in a corner, dreaming, I expect, of J. W. Booth. . . . Miss Fitzpatrick playing with her favorite cat. . . .

But hark! the door-bell rings, and Mr. J. W. Booth is announced. And listen to the scamperings of the ——. Such brushing and fixing.<sup>10</sup>

Through a certified memorandum of dates on the National's register we know that Booth was often away from Washington.

<sup>8</sup> Surrattsville (now Clinton) lay about thirteen miles from Washington. The H Street residence was near Sixth Street. Its number, like many other Washington street numbers of the period, was afterward changed.

<sup>9</sup> He spelled the name *Wiechman* but the incorrect form became fixed in the record.—See "Surratt Trial"; vol. i, p. 369.

<sup>10</sup> Baker, "History of the United States Secret Service"; pp. 562-563.

He checked out and in, not holding any particular room, and the entries disclose many absences of from two to ten days. Twice he was out of town longer—from November 16th to December 12th, 1864, and from January 28th to February 22nd, 1865. The register did not show brief trips, such as, for example, to Charles County (where he is known to have been once in December 1864 and undoubtedly was at other times), or to Baltimore. There was then no railway in Lower Maryland, but it was only about twenty miles from Washington to Charles County's northern border, and Booth had horses.

Train service permitted him to spend a long day in Baltimore, only forty miles distant, and to return at night if he wished. He frequented Barnum's City Hotel (where he sometimes took a room) and Guy's restaurant, across the street, and met his old friends, including Sam Arnold and Michael O'Laughlin. These two belonged to families that had been in Baltimore for years, and John had known them from boyhood. Each had been a schoolmate of his—O'Laughlin in Baltimore, Arnold at Catonsville. Both had been in the Confederate army, and O'Laughlin had subsequently taken the oath of allegiance. Arnold was unemployed, dividing his time between his home in Baltimore and that of his brother William at Hookstown, six miles distant. The O'Laughlin home was at 57 North Exeter Street, opposite the Booth town house, the property being owned by Mary Ann Booth. Michael was intermittently in Washington, where he took orders for his brother, a feed-and-produce merchant in Baltimore.

Baltimore swarmed with irreconcilables to whom the existence of martial law (which such as they had made necessary) was an unforgivable affront. When Gen. Lew Wallace took command of the Middle Department, 8th Army Corps, on March 22nd, 1864, he was not long in discovering that, even at that late period of the war, conditions in the Monument City were bad. Maj. H. B. Smith, assistant provost marshal-general and chief of detectives, had under his direction a corps of forty men and women, and they were none too many. "Blockade-running schemes were," he wrote, "without limit as to variety or manner of evasion." Men made a business of taking recruits to the Southern army. Military intelligence brought from Washington was relayed to the Confed-



erates. Sloops and yawls braved the Federal patrol to land contraband in Virginia.

In Charles and St. Mary's Counties, Lower Maryland, stores from Baltimore were hidden in cellars, haystacks, and barns, later to be forwarded across the Potomac. Baltimoreans received and aided Confederate spies, who, according to Major Smith, would readily pose as deserters and take the oath of allegiance at Department headquarters. Federal clerks who lived in Baltimore's rooming-houses had to be guarded in their remarks, for anything useful was likely to find its way to the Confederate authorities.<sup>11</sup>

Mails passed regularly through Charles County between Baltimore and Richmond. They were sent to, and collected from, Bryantown (or sometimes Charlotte Hall) and reached the Potomac about twilight. On the Maryland side the official agent was Thomas A. Jones, a farmer whose house stood near the mouth of Pope's Creek, high above the Potomac and about two miles and a half from the river, of which long views could be had in either direction. On the Virginia side, in the "northern neck" between the Potomac and the Rappahannock, was a Confederate signal camp with Sergt. Harry Brogden in charge.<sup>12</sup>

At dusk, when the surface of the river grew vague and uncertain and the lofty bluffs threw deceptive shadows, a boat rowed by men of the signal corps would cross to the Maryland shore, where Jones had deposited the mail in the hollow of an old tree. If for any reason the way were not clear, a warning signal was displayed from his house. Galloping through the night, ferried over the Rappahannock from Port Conway to Port Royal, carriers posted on to Richmond, where next morning, only twenty-four hours late, newspapers from New York and other Northern cities were in the hands of Jefferson Davis' cabinet. Travelers whose passes from Richmond were in order were taken forth and back in the signal-corps boat. Jones—and sometimes others—also did considerable business in ferrying passengers, crossings being made

<sup>11</sup> Major Smith's "Between the Lines" contains a fund of material not to be had elsewhere, with transcripts of documents.

<sup>12</sup> In December 1864 the camp was on the site of Washington's birthplace, about one and a half miles from Oak Grove.



nearly every night during the earlier part of the war. None of these activities was permanently broken up by the Federal gun-boats.

To the military authorities in Washington, Lower Maryland was in greater part a *terra incognita*—to Baltimoreans, many of whom originally came from there, the region was familiar. For some of them who were "in the know," its short cuts, byways, marshes, runlets, and Potomac waterfront were as an open book. It was a land gullied by "branches," "runs," and creeks; with boggy tracts, the great Zekiah Swamp among them; its few roads poor and hilly, and stretches of its untilled fields overgrown with small pines. Many of the inhabitants knew little of the outside world with the exception of Baltimore and possibly the "old counties" along the Virginia shore of the river. This section of Maryland has aptly been called a "Union frontier," and in many cases the indifferent "loyalty" of its people changed to heartfelt disloyalty when slavery ceased and the labor problem became difficult.

E. A. Pollard, the Southern historian, boasted that there was "a *real* secession party" in Baltimore as late as 1865. Ladies of the town's "upper circles" endeavored to present to Col. Harry Gilmor, Confederate raider, a saber for which they paid in New York \$125 in gold. No doubt they hoped he might wear it when entering the city in triumph. On November 1st, 1864, Major Smith intercepted the messenger who was taking to Gilmor the saber and a note from one of the donors. The writer of the note was tried, and sentenced to pay a fine of \$5,000 and serve a term of five years in prison; but after a few days she was released. Gilmor later told Major Smith that if he had been lucky enough to get the saber, he "would have killed many a Yank with it."

Even the pulpit, according to the Major, was in a few instances disloyal in sentiment. It would not have been strange if in saloons on "The Causeway" or in other of Baltimore's "tough spots" the old pre-war spirit of the Know-Nothings, of the Blood Tubs and the Plug-Uglies yet flickered; or if zealots behind closed doors laid desperate plots. Asia had long before counseled John Booth that if he went on the stage he ought to keep out of politics. It was

good advice. He should have followed it—and it would have been well if he likewise had kept out of Baltimore.

He was here, there, yonder; and strange hints of him rise from unlikely places. Sometimes he was at Edwin's house in New York, where Mary Ann Booth and Rosalie made their home. The wounded Adam Badeau found him there in July 1863. Both Edwin and John, said Badeau, "dressed my wounds and tended me with the greatest care."<sup>13</sup> In June of 1864 Edwin had written to his friend Miss Emma Cary:

My brother Wilkes is here for the summer, and we intend taking advantage of our thus being brought together, with nothing to do, and will, in the course of a week or two, give a performance of "Julius Cæsar"—in which I shall undertake Brutus instead of Cassius—for the benefit of the statue we wish to erect in Central Park.

This benefit performance, as we know, was not given until November 25th, and John had meanwhile taken quarters in Washington. In the middle of November he was in New York for rehearsals. His friend Chester, who played Trebonius, wished to know why he was not acting, and other friends joked with him about his investments in oil.<sup>14</sup> He was well acquainted in New York, promenaded lower Broadway, and patronized the "House of Lords," a saloon-restaurant on Houston Street.

Politically, he must have found in New York much that was akin to his own spirit. Horace Greeley once said to James R. Gilmore of the *Tribune* staff that in New York "the ideas and vital aims of the Rebellion" were "generally more prevalent than even in South Carolina." New York was a center of forged enlistment, bounty-jumping, bounty-broking, seditious journalism. It was the town of the Draft Riots, and John Booth appears to have been there when they occurred. The riots began on July 11th, 1863; were not finally quelled till the 16th, when the Seventh regiment arrived from the front and dispersed the mob. Houses were sacked; Negroes chased and hanged to lampposts; the of-

<sup>13</sup> John laughed to Asia about this: "Imagine me helping that wounded soldier with my rebel sinews!"

<sup>14</sup> The "oil business" and its maneuvers were popular objects of ridicule. Minstrel shows had skits about them.

fices of the provost marshal wrecked. The Negro orphan asylum was burned. The mob, says Mrs. Lamb (in her "History of the City of New York") "tore down and trampled under foot the national flags, and robbed stores in open day; all business was suspended, street-cars and stages did not dare to run." . . . Mayor Fernando Wood had recommended to the council that New York secede and become a "free city." In New York Booth could not help sensing a disloyalty that, if it had not been resisted, would possibly, as Greeley declared, "have swept over the North and broken the Union into fragments."

Asia, married to John S. Clarke, manager and comedian, was living in an old mansion in Philadelphia. John had now and then rested there between engagements—or, as the *Spirit of the Times* expressed it, had enjoyed his *otium cum dignitate*. Edwin objected to what he considered John's secessionist froth, but John could speak freely to Asia. One day, harping on his constant theme, he said:

"If the North conquer us, it will be by numbers only."

"If the North conquer us," Asia mildly replied, "we are of the North."

"Not I!" he burst out furiously. "Not I—so help me holy God! My soul, life, and possessions are for the South!"

From Philadelphia there was a busy traffic with the South, both through Chesapeake Bay and by land. Up to the spring of 1864 contraband passed unendingly, some of it *via* Baltimore, some by other routes. The trade became more precarious after that but never was entirely suppressed.

It appears from a sketch written by Asia in 1874, when living in England, that John as an actor had a pass issued under Grant's authority, that he had used this otherwise than professionally, and that at one time he was purchasing the best grade of quinine out of his own means and helping to smuggle it across the Confederate lines. Asia says that he went as far afield as Kansas and Texas.

During the winter of 1864-1865 he was in Montreal. It was reported in the *Telegraph* of that city that he talked with J. W. Buckland, manager of the Theatre Royal, about an engagement at that house, and later mentioned his wish to get to Richmond and appear there for the benefit of Confederate hospitals. He took the

greater part of his wardrobe to Montreal and left it in the care of a friend—apparently Martin, the liquor dealer of Baltimore, who had given him that letter of introduction to Dr. William Queen. His avowed intention was to go from Canada to Nassau and thence reach a Southern port on a blockade runner.<sup>15</sup> These runners were constantly sailing from the Bahamas and had brought to the islands a short-lived prosperity.

At St. Lawrence Hall, then the leading hotel in Montreal (or, for that matter, in Canada) lived Jacob Thompson (who had been Buchanan's Secretary of the Interior), Clement C. Clay, Beverley Tucker, and George N. Sanders—agents all, official or unofficial, of the Confederate government; John Booth had stayed there, and there during the war a Southern coterie was generally found. George Iles, afterward manager of the Windsor Hotel (Montreal) and a writer of authority in scientific matters, was then office boy to James Baillie, a wholesale dry goods merchant of the city and an outspoken sympathizer with the Confederacy. Baillie became a personal friend of the Southern agents and also of John Booth, who had taken lodgings in Côté Street, near the Theatre Royal. Mr. Iles stated to the present writer:

Several times I called on Mr. Booth with a book or other packet from Mr. Baillie, and sometimes I brought him a verbal invitation to luncheon or dinner. He was courtesy incarnate—with the manners of a Virginian of the old school. I remember him distinctly in the yellow fox-skin cap which he wore when photographed by George Martin, in his St. Peter Street studio.

Booth was described by Mr. Iles as "occasionally" a visitor at the hotel.<sup>16</sup>

In the "Personal Memoirs" of Gen. Phil Sheridan<sup>17</sup> is to be found a curious anecdote of the early days of 1865 in the Shenandoah Valley. A man who went by the name of Lomas, and who said he was a Marylander, had been employed as a spy by the General—largely because he was recommended by Secretary Stanton, for whom he had acted in that capacity. He proved to be

<sup>15</sup> Testimony of S. K. Chester. *Daily News* (New York), Apr. 27, 1865; p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Mr. Iles pointed out that the references to Booth and to himself in Grace King's "Memoirs of a Southern Woman" are in many respects erroneous.

<sup>17</sup> Vol. ii, pp. 108-112.



unusually intelligent; but when his reports were checked against those of men detailed by Maj. H. K. Young, Sheridan's chief of "scouts," there were divergences that led Sheridan to believe him a "double spy"—that is, one also in the service of the Confederacy. "I felt, however," said the General, "that with good watching he could do me little harm, and if my suspicions were incorrect he might be very useful, so I held on to him."

At the beginning of February, around the time when Major Young captured Harry Gilmor, Lomas requested the General to find employment for an acquaintance who, he said, had been with Mosby's guerrillas but had left them on account of a quarrel. At midnight Lomas brought to Sheridan's headquarters a person heavily disguised, who, having shed "various contrivances," turned out to be "a rather slender, dark-complexioned, handsome young man, of easy address and captivating manners." He gave his name as Renfrew,<sup>18</sup> satisfactorily answered the General's questions, and evinced a familiar knowledge of Mosby and Mosby's command. It was arranged that during the following night Lomas and Renfrew should set out to burn railway bridges.

From the moment they left they were shadowed by men of Major Young's force; and when it became evident that they were furnishing intelligence to the enemy, they were arrested and ordered to Fort Warren in Boston harbor. While passing through Baltimore, they mysteriously escaped from their guards and nothing further was definitely heard of them. A few weeks later it occurred to Sheridan "that the good-looking Renfrew may have been Wilkes Booth, for he certainly bore a strong resemblance to Booth's pictures."

The projectors of the Great American Myth seem to have been ignorant of this story. They could have done something with it—could have involved Stanton in knavish tricks or deduced that John Booth really was, as has been claimed, an officer in the Confederate army. Here must be registered the plain conviction that the General's suspicions were unfounded; for at the very time when Major Young's men reported Lomas and Renfrew at Strasburg, Virginia, John Booth was at Edwin's in New York, where

<sup>18</sup> The Prince of Wales had made a tour of the United States in 1860 as Baron Renfrew.

(so Junius confided to Asia) he was laboring all one night over a poetic valentine for "Miss Hale." On March 2nd, when Renfrew and Lomas were arrested, John Booth was in Washington at the National Hotel. Furthermore, resemblance to John Booth has been claimed for a staggering number of persons.

During that fatal winter, when John was not acting and when so much of his time was divided between his new home of Washington and his old home of Baltimore, there was on his part what Asia called "a turn towards the evil." It was a drift—we cannot mark any particular occasion; we can only take note of a change. He was becoming quick-tempered; he seemed weary and feverishly abstracted. When he was beneath the Clarkes' roof in Philadelphia, Asia saw and heard much that was surprising and distressing. Late at night men came to the door, asked for John, stood whispering in the hallway. Some she did not know—others she recognized by their voices though they would not answer to their names. John often slept in his clothes and high riding-boots on a couch downstairs.

Once Asia happened to inquire after Michael O'Laughlin, with whom she had been acquainted in Baltimore and who had enlisted in the Confederate ranks. John started.

"Why, what possessed you to ask about him?" he asked sharply. Then more quietly, "He's home on leave."

"Not in the hospital?" Asia persevered.

"No. Forget his name—don't talk of him!"

In late December or early January, John was in New York and called at the house of his friend Chester in Grove Street. He and Chester had known each other for a number of years—Chester had been a member of the Baltimore Museum's stock company in 1855-1856. Since their previous meeting (in November), Booth had written several letters telling of the profits to be made through deals in farm lands in Lower Maryland and urging Chester to invest. Now, during a walk from the Revere House to Greenwich Village, he disclosed that he was in "a large conspiracy to capture the heads of the Government (including the President), and take them to Richmond"—a conspiracy in which from fifty to a hundred persons were associated.

The President was to be taken while in his box at Ford's Theatre and spirited away through a back door, which Chester would hold open, to the public alley. The matter was simple. Booth did not make clear just how he expected to get the President from the box to the stage and across the Potomac; but he said everything was ready and that persons on the Virginia side of the river were joined in the affair. Chester asked whether this were the deal John had been writing about, and John said it was. Chester, in spite of repeated threats, refused to go into it.

But John kept on writing—once sending \$50, saying Chester must be on hand in Washington by Saturday night; and in March he was taking another walk with Chester in New York, denouncing "one John Matthews" as a coward not fit to live because he would have nothing to do with the enterprise, and assuring Chester there was plenty of money in it. However, when Chester insisted on returning the \$50, Booth made no objection, rather inconsistently deploring a lack of funds and stating it would be necessary to "go to Richmond to obtain means."<sup>19</sup>

This plan that Booth importuned Chester to enter into—this plot to abduct the President and perhaps others—is known to have involved John Booth, Sam Arnold, Michael O'Laughlin, and John H. Surratt. One Lewis T. Powell was also in the scheme.

Powell, going by such *aliases* as Wood and Paine, was a young giant who had enlisted in the Second Florida, had been wounded at Gettysburg and taken prisoner, and afterward was detailed as a nurse at Pennsylvania College Hospital. From there he was sent to West Building Hospital in Baltimore; but he decamped, joined up with Mosby's irregulars in Fauquier County, Virginia, and was in that service until January 1865. He then took the oath of allegiance and on January 13th a parole was issued to him. While in hospital at Gettysburg he had met Miss Maggie Branson of Baltimore, who was briefly acting as a nurse. He now went to Baltimore and lodged with the Bransons in the boarding-house that Mrs. M. A. Branson kept at 16 North Eutaw Street.

At this boarding-house he "whipped"—to use Miss Branson's

<sup>19</sup> See Poore's report; vol. i, pp. 43-51. Chester said he thought it was in February that Booth mentioned Richmond, but it was shown to have been later than that (argument of W. S. Cox at the Conspiracy Trial).



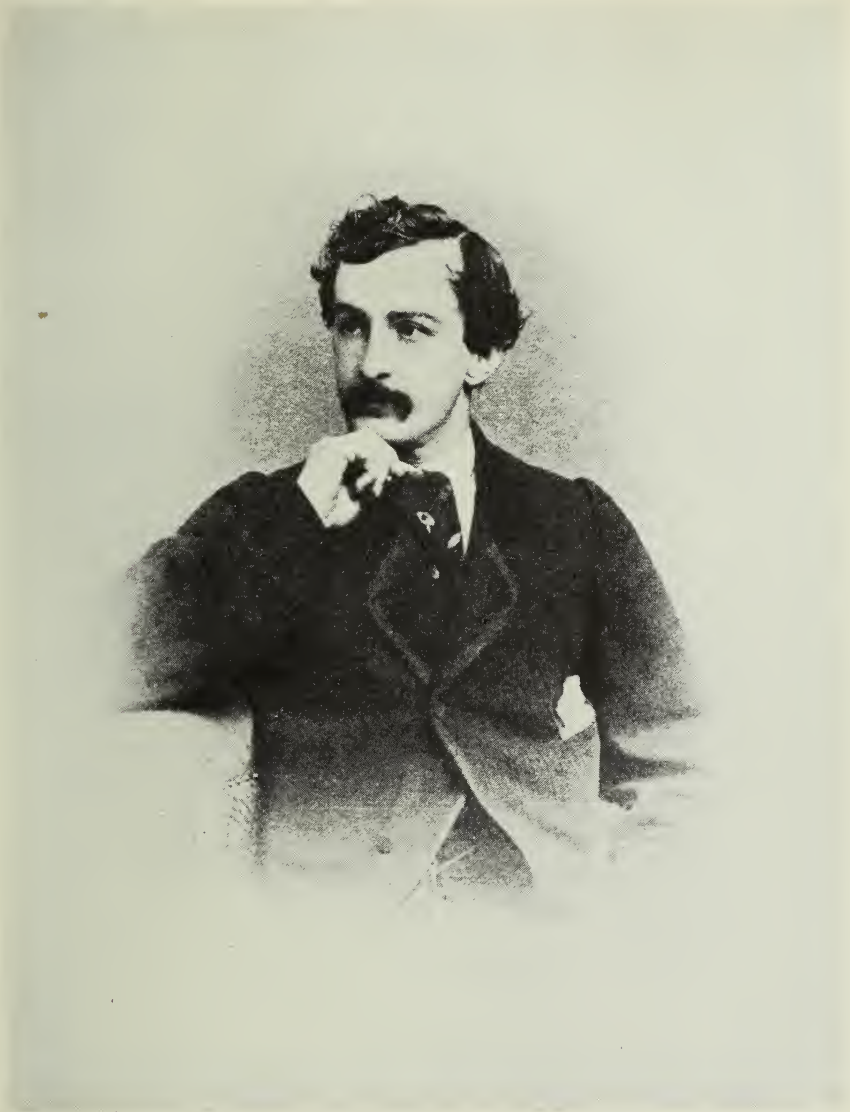
euphemism—a Negro maid who had been impudent to him. According to testimony, he “threw her on the ground and stamped on her body, struck her on the forehead, and said he would kill her.” The maid went to the military authorities to have him arrested. It was charged that he had previously been in Baltimore; but when expected witnesses failed to appear, Major Smith, who felt Powell to be a spy though this could not be proved, advised that he be released but decided that he ought to be removed from the Bransons and from Baltimore. So when Powell, under the name of Lewis Paine, took the oath of allegiance before Smith on March 14th and was paroled, Smith inserted in the parole: “& to go north of Philadelphia & remain during the war.”

Miss Branson, who from her own statement appears to have endorsed the “whipping,” subsequently acknowledged: “I told Lieut. Smith that he [Paine] had not been North before since the war commenced. I at the same time knew he had; I did this to shield him from harm.” She had “walked out” with the gladiatorial Powell-Paine, and called with him at the house of a Mr. Heim on Paca Street. Mr. Heim, it seems, had “business” in Richmond—as did other Baltimoreans. Out of nineteen guests at the Branson establishment, Major Smith could discover only four that unquestionably were loyal.<sup>20</sup> Paine did immediately go north, to the Revere House in New York—he went with money given him by John Booth.

His own story was that just before the outbreak of war, while stationed with the troops at Richmond, he got a pass and went to the theater. This was the first time he had seen a play; John Booth was appearing and Paine was delighted. After the performance he sought out the actor, and these two, so vastly unlike in most ways, were soon on friendly terms. (John quickly made friends with all sorts when he chose.) In Baltimore at twilight of a March day in 1865 Paine was roaming by Barnum’s Hotel when from the steps a voice hailed him and, looking up, he saw Booth. It is certain that John did encounter Paine in Baltimore and there drafted him for the abduction plot. As for the prelude in Richmond, search through the file of the *Daily Dispatch* from

<sup>20</sup> Smith, “Between the Lines”; pp. 255-258, 302-310.





*From a photograph by Fredericks (New York)*

JOHN WILKES BOOTH

"So bright, so gay, so kind" (Clara Morris)

"No young man had brighter prospects in life" (John T. Ford)



January 1st to May 8th, 1861, reveals no mention of John in its theatrical announcements.

Arnold specified the latter part of August 1864, or the early part of September, as the time when, to his knowledge, the idea of abduction first was broached. It was at a conference at Bar-num's Hotel, and Arnold said that he then met O'Laughlin, whom he had not previously known. Paine was still in northern Virginia with Mosby's guerrillas. The basic idea was to seize the President, convey him to Richmond, and thus force a general exchange of prisoners. Exchange of Confederate prisoners had been discontinued by the North and the man-power of the South had thus been considerably reduced.<sup>21</sup>

It seems that Confederate sympathizers in Lower Maryland were well aware of the plot and that details regarding it were spread by the "grapevine route." Many of these people would have been only too ready to further the venture, even though not taking active part in it. Thomas A. Jones, the Confederate mail agent, though denying any connection with it, admitted that about December 1864 the understanding in Charles County was that Lincoln was to be captured while driving without escort near the Navy Yard. One of the conspirators would then mount the box, and as the carriage passed over the Navy Yard bridge Lincoln's captors would wave their hands toward him and shout to the guards, "The President!" Relays of horses would be in waiting and Lincoln would be transported to the west side of Port Tobacco Creek, about four miles below the county town of Port Tobacco and some forty miles from Washington. Word was, Jones said, that the "big actor" Booth was "in it."<sup>22</sup>

The plan unfolded by Booth to Chester was that Lincoln, having been overpowered in his box at Ford's, would be bound, lowered to the stage, and carried to a vehicle in the alley. Arnold said his job was to catch the President when lowered by Paine and Booth. Another idea, it was said, was to take Lincoln prisoner as he walked the dimly lit footway between War Department and Executive Mansion; conduct him through the south grounds to

<sup>21</sup> See Arnold's narrative, *Baltimore American*, Dec. 7-20, 1902.

<sup>22</sup> *Century Magazine*, Apr. 1884; p. 826.

the old Van Ness house, near the Potomac and "given over to the bat, the owl, and the spider"; and there keep him hidden in the cellar until he could be got across the river and delivered to the Confederacy as a hostage.

From February 13th, 1865, to March 18th, J. W. Wallack and E. L. Davenport were lessees of the old Washington Theatre, and during the last week of their tenancy it was arranged that they give an afternoon performance of Tom Taylor's "Still Waters Run Deep" at the Soldiers' Home. Booth, familiar with local theatrical gossip, had undoubtedly learned of this well in advance, and also that Lincoln intended to be present. He assembled his group for a special meeting.

O'Laughlin was there—a slight, pleasant-featured man, wearing heavy black mustache and imperial; so was Arnold, a gentlemanly-looking fellow with curling brown hair, and the beetle-browed, hawk-nosed John Surratt, and George A. Atzerodt, a thickset, hulking wagonmaker with a German accent. The six-foot, glowering Paine was there, nicknamed Mosby by some of them; and a "small man"—little David E. Herold, to whom those who knew him applied the formulaic adjectives "light and trifling"—a pharmacist's clerk once employed at Thompson's drugstore, where the Lincolns bought medicines.

Atzerodt had been living at Port Tobacco (those who couldn't pronounce his Teutonic name called him that) and had agreed to furnish a boat to make the crossing of the Potomac. Davy Herold had often been gunning in Lower Maryland, was supposed to know the terrain and to be somewhat acquainted among the people, and would be of use as handy man. Paine brought his muscle and his sullen hardihood. John Surratt was a Confederate "runner," taking dispatches to the signal-corps' boats on the Potomac, and he had carried on that work while drawing Federal pay for conducting the Surrattsville post office. He thought it a "fascinating" life and the Federal detectives great boobies, for they "seemed to have no idea whatever how to search me." Now he could pilot Lincoln's carriage across the Eastern Branch, down through Prince George's and Charles Counties, over roads along which he so often had driven a buggy with papers hidden underneath its floor boards. He had already left with John M. Lloyd,



at the Surrattsville house, two carbines, ammunition, a monkey wrench, and twenty feet of rope.

During the meeting, Arnold said, a dispute occurred between him and Booth. Arnold had given notice that unless something were done that week he would retire from the thing. Booth angrily replied that Arnold ought to be shot for breaking his oath in that fashion. Since about February 10th Arnold and O'Laughlin had been rooming at Mrs. Van Tine's boarding-house on D Street and getting their meals at the Franklin House (corner of D and Eighth)—all, presumably, at Booth's expense. A horse and vehicle had been on call at a livery stable whenever they wished to drive out. Most of their time, as Arnold stated, had been spent at Rullman's, 456 Pennsylvania Avenue, "in drinking and amusements, with the Baltimoreans besides ourselves congregating there." Booth had, in fact, subsidized the whole crew, and was now in a mood to express his authority. Arnold told him, "If you feel inclined to shoot me, I shall defend myself."

This meeting was held, so Arnold wrote, on March 15th at Gautier's saloon-restaurant on Pennsylvania Avenue between Twelfth and Thirteenth, where there were private rooms. On the afternoon of the 17th Booth and his ill-assorted company of six rode out Seventh Street and beyond the town—but to no purpose. Lincoln had been detained by his engagements and consequently had not attended the theatrical performance at the Soldiers' Home. Arnold and O'Laughlin forthwith returned to Baltimore. On March 27th Booth telegraphed to O'Laughlin to come with or without Sam, but no reply is in evidence. On the same day Arnold wrote Booth that "the G——t suspicions something is going on there," suggesting that the matter be dropped for the present, criticizing Booth for mismanagement, and proposing that somebody "go and see how it will be taken at R——d [Richmond]." He obtained a clerkship with John W. ("Wickey") Wharton, sutler at Old Point, and entered upon his work on April 2nd. The abduction plot, after hanging fire for six months, had at last simply fizzled.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Arnold's confession, written for Provost Marshal McPhail (Baltimore), *New York Times*, Jan. 19, 1869; p. 8. Arnold's narrative, *Baltimore American* (Dec. 1902). Weichmann's testimony is of dubious value.

In a lecture delivered some years afterward, Surratt explained:

It was our intention to seize the carriage, which was drawn by a splendid pair of horses, and have one of our men mount the box and drive for Southern Maryland *via* Benning's Bridge.<sup>24</sup> We felt confident that all the cavalry in the city would never overtake us. We were all mounted on swift horses besides having a thorough knowledge of the country, it being determined to abandon the carriage after passing the city limits. Upon the suddenness of our blow and the celerity of our movements we depended for success. By the time the alarm could have been given and horses saddled, we would have been on our way through Southern Maryland toward the Potomac River.

He also stated that the conspirators did not learn until about three-quarters of an hour before the time set that Lincoln meant to attend the performance of "Still Waters Run Deep." This is hardly possible and is contradicted by other evidence. Still later, in a long interview in the *Washington Post* of April 3rd, 1898, Surratt declared that when the "wild scheme" of abduction was presented to him by Booth, he "simply laughed," knowing it to be "utterly impracticable." He then "dismissed the matter" and "supposed Booth had done the same." This is quite unbelievable and is only a minor specimen of the contradictions that bestrew the path of these events.

Two others were cognizant of the abduction plot—John Matthews and Louis J. Weichmann. Matthews stated in 1881 that he was born in Baltimore, had grown up there, and knew Booth since they were lads together. In Washington during the winter of 1864-1865, Matthews said, Booth often dropped in to see him, and sometimes talked of the feasibility of abducting the President, though never confiding any of the plans. He heard the performance of "Still Waters" discussed by Wallack, Davenport, and Matthews (who was in the cast). Some days before the play was given, Matthews took with him to Baltimore, at Booth's request, a trunk to be delivered to "a gentleman." This trunk was filled, according to Matthews, with provisions, toilet articles, and various comforts for Lincoln on the journey to the Confederate lines.<sup>25</sup>

Louis J. Weichmann stated under oath that he had once asked

<sup>24</sup> This was farther up the Eastern Branch, at the end of Pennsylvania and Kentucky Avenues.

<sup>25</sup> Col. F. A. Burr in the *Philadelphia Press*, Dec. 4, 1881; p. 2.

Captain Gleason, a fellow clerk in the office of the commissary-general of prisoners, "Captain, do you think any party could attempt the capture of President Lincoln?" Gleason, he said, had "laughed and hooted at the idea." Weichmann later was in a sense confirmed by Gleason; but Gleason went further, declaring that *as early as February 20th* Weichmann had told him of a plan to abduct Lincoln and the Cabinet. The time set was March 4th, the day of Lincoln's second inaugural, "as then there would be so many strangers in the city that people's attention would be diverted." This sounded to Gleason like nonsense.<sup>26</sup> So it did to Lieut. Josiah W. Sharp, Gleason's roommate and an assistant provost marshal on the staff of Gen. C. C. Augur, commander of the military department of Washington. Weichmann later said that he had told an enrolling officer named McDavitt and McDavitt had notified the authorities, who were rather incredulous. If true (and there is no reason for doubt), Gleason's version discredits Weichmann's professions, when under oath, that what he said to Gleason regarding abduction was "merely a casual remark" and that he had no idea such a thing was really in the wind. Weichmann was a friend of J. H. Surratt, with whom he had attended a preparatory school in Howard County, near Baltimore.<sup>27</sup>

At the Capitol, before the inaugural ceremonies of March 4th, 1865, an incident occurred that has been much garbled and sometimes denied. The President and the justices of the Supreme Court had just walked through the rotunda and out to the east portico, when a determined and excited man broke past the line of Capitol police stationed in the rotunda to hold back the crowd. He tried to gain the east portal but Officer J. W. Westfall grabbed him. The door was closed, and after a scuffle the man was forced back by the police.

His conduct was afterward freely remarked upon by those who had chanced to witness it, and the historian B. J. Lossing wrote that he heard talk of it at Willard's that evening. Westfall and

<sup>26</sup> *Magazine of History*, Feb. 1911; pp. 59-65.

<sup>27</sup> A letter written by Surratt to a cousin on Feb. 6, 1865, was on stationery of the Office of the Commissary-General of Prisoners—where Weichmann was employed and Surratt was not (Baker, "History of the United States Secret Service," pp. 562-563).

other police officers, including Maj. B. B. French, the commissioner, subsequently claimed to recognize a photograph of Booth as that of the man in the rotunda. In April, at the "House of Lords" in New York, Booth and S. K. Chester were quietly talking when suddenly John banged the table and volleyed at Chester, "What an excellent chance I had to kill the President, if I had wished, on inauguration day! I was as near to him as I am to you." Though it may have been he who struggled with Westfall, he had not then determined on murder. Abduction was at that time his purpose. He may have been stirred to this outbreak by his extravagant, irrational dislike of Abraham Lincoln, who for a second time had defeated the endeavors of his enemies to keep him from office.<sup>28</sup>

The incident appears not to have reached the newspapers of the succeeding days. They spoke only of a Thomas Clemens who was arrested for "very disorderly conduct" in front of Willard's on Sunday (the day after). One of his random vaporings was, according to the *Evening Star*,<sup>29</sup> that he came from Alexandria to kill President Lincoln. "He seemed," the paper observed, "to be none the better for whiskey." The *Intelligencer* said there had been "not a single commitment to the District jail on the 4th of March."

In the stress of later developments an attempt was made to trace the origin of the abduction plot to the Southern agents in Canada. This attempt was unfortunately bolstered by the testimony of one Richard Montgomery, a perjurer, and of his associate, one Charles A. Dunham, *alias* Sandford Conover, *alias* James Watson Wallace, a rank perjurer and an instructor in perjury, convicted of perjury by the Criminal Court of the District of Columbia. Dunham's testimony as a whole was found to be an imposture, and any part of it is suspect. On the face of it, it is highly improbable that a specialized transaction like this would be managed from such a distance. That Confederate agents in Canada

<sup>28</sup> New York *Tribune*, Apr. 28, 1876; p. 1 and Feb. 15, 1884; p. 3. Lossing's account was in *The Independent*, Feb. 14, 1884; pp. 3-4. An article by Lamon in the *Washington Critic*, Sept. 17, 1887, had affidavits. There are no records of the Capitol Police prior to 1898.

<sup>29</sup> Mar. 8.



were guilty of procuring and abetting the raid on St. Albans (Vermont), the essay at firing New York, and John Y. Beall's expedition to free the prisoners on Johnson's Island, there can be no reasonable doubt. That they had anything to do with the abduction plot is one of those gratuitous suppositions that cluster around the Great American Myth. It is an indictment that, for lack of material evidence, cannot be sustained.

Nor can the suggestion of David H. Bates<sup>30</sup> and others that John Booth, because he was in the city, may have been connected with Kennedy and others in the plot to burn New York. Bates, evidently conscious of this, turned from Booth to Paine and referred to a "confession" allegedly made by Paine to Maj. T. T. Eckert, chief of the War Department's telegraph staff. If Bates' account is faithful, Paine told Eckert much that was untrustworthy. In November 1864 he was not in New York but in northern Virginia with Mosby the raider. Hence he could not have refused to be a party to this "crime involving injury and probably death."<sup>31</sup>

The authorities at Richmond cannot be shown to have been concerned in the abduction plot. It was *after* that plot had fallen through that Arnold, in his letter of March 27th, 1865, proposed that somebody "go and see how it will be taken at R——d." It was then that Booth (who was out of Washington from March 21st to the 25th) told Chester this would have to be done as Booth himself was "so very short of funds." Arnold in his confession said explicitly: "The Richmond authorities, as far as I know, knew nothing of the conspiracy."

It is in Baltimore that we first hear of the abduction plot—in late August or early September of 1864 at Barnum's City Hotel. Not only John Booth but Michael O'Laughlin and Samuel Arnold were Baltimoreans. Paine had become acquainted there—had found there, at the Bransons and among their friends, a congenial atmosphere. Surratt, for his part, was familiar with Baltimore and was constantly in and out of it, for it was from Baltimore that many of the dispatches proceeded that he sped upon their way to the Confederacy. He did not move from Surrattsville to Wash-

<sup>30</sup> "Lincoln in the Telegraph Office"; pp. 306-307.

<sup>31</sup> *Ib.*, pp. 380-381.

ington until the autumn of 1864, and had spent his life up to that time in a part of Maryland that was closely under Baltimore's influence.

Both Arnold and O'Laughlin, like many another Baltimorean, had gone to the Confederacy to serve in its armies. Paine, it is clear, had no respect whatever for a parole. O'Laughlin and Arnold may have had, but they were among those whose records for disloyalty were on file at Baltimore in the cabinets of the provost marshal. The animus of Booth, so obvious when he seems to have been reciting "Julius Cæsar" in stealthy conclaves or when he is said to have been burning railway bridges, was the animus of Baltimore's disloyalists, who had denounced Lincoln in 1861 and, more warily, denounced him still. Atzerodt was a native of Lower Maryland, and Herold was the only Washingtonian of this immediate company.

To what extent certain persons in Lower Maryland, especially Dr. Samuel Mudd, had knowledge of the plot, or whether indeed they knew of it at all, has often been the subject of prejudiced and futile controversy. That knowledge of it *was* widespread among the "right sort" is hardly to be questioned. Booth's interest in land was of course a mere subterfuge; an excuse for visits in that section. Both Mudd and Queen were, however, too far from the direct route between Washington and Port Tobacco to have been of any assistance in the proceedings.

It has been asserted that the plot "might almost be called harmless, from its perfect absurdity and impracticability." Certainly there were difficulties. Even if the President could have been seized when his carriage was unescorted by the Union Light Guard, it would have been no easy matter to spirit him out of Washington. The roads in Lower Maryland were heavy at that time of year. Pursuit would soon have been organized. As for capturing Lincoln at Ford's and getting him away—this seems even more dubious. Regarding the notion of lifting him over the brick wall, Sergt. Smith Stimmel wrote:

There were those who thought that this scheme was practical and could have been carried out, but I doubt it very much. In the first place the captors would have had the President's great physical powers to contend with, and secondly, any demonstration of that kind would

have been in close proximity to the guards at the White House and would have brought them quickly to his rescue. They [*i.e.*, the conspirators] might have killed him, but I do not believe they could have seized and carried him away alive.<sup>32</sup>

John Booth was ready on Saturday evening, March 18th, for his appearance in McCullough's benefit at Ford's. The fiendish Pescara, who so hated the Moors that he resolved to destroy them, had always been one of his most commended rôles. Matthews was in the cast, and in the audience were Surratt and Weichmann (their complimentary tickets furnished by Booth), Herold and Atzerodt, to view their leader as he stabbed and to hear him cry:

What if I rush,  
And with a blow strike life from out his heart?

There were drinks afterward in Taltavull's restaurant, adjoining the theater on the lower side, and oysters at Kloman's oyster-bay; and Weichmann was present, accepting Booth's hospitality.

Heretofore regarded as temperate for those hard-drinking times, Booth now was consuming astonishing quantities of liquor, though possibly only one that knew him well could have discerned it. Brandy was said to be his favorite tippie; and as the duty on imported liquors was high during the war, the local price of a small glass of French brandy was usually fifty cents. What with one thing and another, John had been spending lavishly all winter. By John T. Ford's account, he "squandered fully if not over \$10,000 of his previous earnings." He had dragooned his Falstaffian army but, as he hinted to Chester, its maintenance had been expensive—and now it was disbanded and he could not rally it. All those months of work for nothing!

From the saloons and livery stables where he met with his accomplices, or from Mrs. Surratt's homely boarding-establishment, he would turn to the greenroom of Ford's, where he mingled and chatted with the lovely and the talented of his profession; or to the public rooms of Willard's, where officers sauntered about after dining and Congressmen talked; or to the parlors and ball-room of the National, where always he was a preferred cavalier. Only recently he had been seen at Ford's, occupying a box with

<sup>32</sup> *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, Jan. 1927; p. 17.

the Misses Hale. It was believed that he was engaged to one of them. Junius stated to a correspondent of the *Chicago Times* that such was the fact. Asia says there was "a secret and conditional engagement."<sup>33</sup> Mrs. Blanche (Chapman) Ford informed the present writer that in the world of the theater an engagement to Maggie Mitchell was rumored.

Writing from Franklin, Pennsylvania, on February 21st, his agent Simonds complained:

Your strange note of the 16th rec'd I hardly know what to make of you this winter—so different from your usual self. Have you lost all your ambition or what is the matter. Don't get offended with me John but I cannot but think you are wasting your time spending the entire season in Washington doing nothing where it must be expensive to live and all for no other purpose beyond pleasure.

If you had taken 5 or 10000 dollars and come out here and spent the season living here with us, traveling off over the country hunting up property I believe we both could have made considerable money by it. It is not too late yet for I believe the great rush for property is to be this Spring and if you are not going to act this season come out here John where at least you can live prudently and where I really believe you can make money. Come John immediately We have plenty of room at our house now.

You must not tell such extravagant stories John about me. We work very hard and from the office derive so far a very comfortable income but nothing even compared to what you used to make acting—large indeed though compared with what we formerly rec'd. We have not got rich yet John and when I do you will be the first one to know of it. But I do wish you had come out here and staid this winter and still wish you would come now. It would be more profitable than living in Washington. . . .<sup>34</sup>

If John had gone, he might not have made a fortune in the "oil business"—even if the optimistic Simonds did look to a boom with the first rustle of spring. But the history of America might have been different.

<sup>33</sup> Philadelphia *Inquirer*, Apr. 22, 1865; p. 2. "The Unlocked Book" (London ed.), p. 118.

<sup>34</sup> Archives of the Judge Advocate General.



## Six . . . . . CHARITY AND HATE

"IF to be the head of Hell is as hard as what I have to undergo here, I could find it in my heart to pity Satan himself"—so, with that latent sadness in his eyes, the harrowed Lincoln once told General Schenck. At another time, in sprightlier mood, and doubtless with a wry smile, he protested:

"I wish George Washington or some of those old patriots were here in my place so that I could have a little rest."

Leonard Volk had made a life mask of him at Chicago in April of 1860; and in the spring of 1865, at Washington, Clark Mills (who did Andrew Jackson on his prancing charger in Lafayette Square) made another. In these contrasting masks, more effectively than in photographs, may be read the toll that the war years had laid upon him. The second, as Hay points out, has the deeply cut lines "set, as if the living face, like the copy, had been in bronze; . . . the mouth is fixed like that of an archaic statue; a look as of one on whom sorrow and care had done their worst without victory is on all the features." . . .

It is the Lincoln whom Crook, on duty in the passageway, heard groaning in his sleep—the Lincoln who said to Owen Lovejoy ("the best friend I had in Congress"): "This war is eating my life out; I have a strong impression that I shall not live to see the end." In July 1864, when a visitor, noticing how worn he seemed, had remarked, "You are wearing yourself out with work," he objected: "I can't work less; but it isn't that—work never troubled me."

There had been the *exposé* in Baltimore, the night trip through the city—the reluctant conviction that men sought his life. He had

become identified with a cause, and all through his first term he was made aware that, hating the cause, men also hated him. Yet such was his nature, so inclined was he to "give all men credit for fairness and sincerity," that even after the mob attack on the 19th and the ensuing "three glorious days" he was conciliatory, says Hay, toward "a penitent and suppliant crowd of conditional Secessionists from Baltimore, who having sowed the wind seem to have no particular desire to reap the whirlwind."

As he waited for news of hourly developments in the South, office-seekers had at once beset him in droves, until he compared himself to "a man so busy in letting rooms in one end of his house that he cannot stop to put out the fire that is burning the other." When civilian patriots had rushed to urge upon him their singular fitness for a general's commission, he said he had more pegs than holes in which to put them.

For his Cabinet he had selected those who would, as he thought, best serve the nation in parlous days; and as a result he had been blessed with a council painfully independent, inharmonious, and incohesive. Their reciprocal dislikes were always troublesome. As his bulky diary reveals, Welles of the Navy did not relish either Chase of the Treasury or Seward of the State Department. In return it was said that Gustavus V. Fox, chief clerk of the Navy Department and later assistant secretary, was really the Department's brains; and some were not displeased when a petition to Lincoln for Welles' removal was exhibited in the Merchants' Exchange and Newsroom at Boston and "extensively signed."

Discord reigned between Seward and Chase; and in reporting hostile or disloyal acts on Chase's part an under-secretary in the Department of State would finish with: "The old man [Lincoln] knows all about it and will not do a thing!"<sup>1</sup> Blair, head of the Post Office, denounced both Stanton and Chase. Chase encouraged conservative Republican senators who wished to get rid of Seward; but Seward, after an ineffectual experiment toward domineering over Lincoln, wrote to his wife that "the President is the best of us" and became thenceforth a stanch and worthy aid. On the contrary the elegant, stately Chase, potentially the Cabinet's ablest member, not only kept toward his chief an attitude of dis-

<sup>1</sup> A. K. McClure, "Our Presidents and How We Make Them," pp. 125, 128, 131-132.

dain and mistrust but through jealousy and ambition condescended to skulking intrigues against him. He actually fostered a movement to hold, prior to the regular Republican convention of 1864, an independent convention in protest against Lincoln's candidacy. Finally Lincoln accepted one of Chase's numerous resignations, and then, when old Roger Taney—Taney of the Dred Scott case—passed away, returned good for evil by naming Chase to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In Carpenter's painting "The First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation" (which hangs above the eastern grand staircase of the Capitol) you may see Chase standing with an expression of magisterial complacency beside the seated Lincoln.

When Cameron had been eased from the secretariat of War, Lincoln did a characteristic thing in appointing Edwin M. Stanton, Buchanan's Attorney-General, to the vacant post. Stanton—the "Great Energy," as friends sometimes called him—petulant, explosive, brusque, incorruptibly honest, prodigious in toil—came gradually to an appreciation of Lincoln; and though he never ceased to be rude at times ("No one who ever saw Mr. Stanton," declared "Bull Run" Russell, "would expect from him courtesy of manner or delicacy of feeling" . . .), nevertheless between President and Secretary confidence and regard existed. "It is a fact"—so we are assured by David H. Bates, manager of the War Department's telegraph office—" . . . that during the three and a quarter years of their close official relations the two men worked in almost entire harmony. There never appeared, to the writer's observation, any real conflict between them. . . . Each knew how far to yield to the other without sacrifice of prerogative."

"Folks come up here," Lincoln once remarked, "and tell me there are a great many men who have all Stanton's excellent qualities without his defects. All I have to say is, I haven't met 'em; I don't know 'em."

Every office day, from 10 to 11 and from 3 to 4, Stanton gave audience. A perpetually irritable look in his stern little eyes, he stood at a high writing-desk, leaning his left arm upon it, from time to time adjusting his spectacles, and curtly propelling his visitors into the world of out-of-doors. He had a brownish beard, threaded with gray, and it was a fancy of Lincoln's to accost him

as "Mars." Though he has been represented as largely deficient in a sense of humor, he had—so Dickens himself told James T. Fields—a most extraordinary knowledge of Dickens' works, and "a power of taking the text up at any point." The "outer crust of his harsh manner," David Bates argued, was "very thin"—but it was thick enough to incense the many that could not pierce it.

Lincoln managed his unruly Cabinet with peculiar success, and in the prosecution of the war he could rely upon Stanton; but neither Stanton nor he had the recipe for making generals out of mud, as Napoleon bragged he made marshals. "And oh, there is great want of capacity and will among our military leaders"—thus mourned the diarizing Welles in August 1862. There had been overcast days that tried even Lincoln's enduring soul—days when loyal Northern hearts grew weary, when defeatism spread among the people, and when Vallandigham the demagogue could clamor, "The war is in your hands a most bloody and costly failure." The conscription act had been flouted, Copperheadism had flourished, and there had been much talk of the Knights of the Golden Circle and their successors, the Order of American Knights and the Sons of Liberty—secret organizations of ill-defined extent that opposed the war, defied the President, and plotted armed uprising. No wonder Lincoln had demanded: "Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier-boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wily agitator who induces him to desert?"

During Federal reverses even avowed Unionists raised violent language against the Administration. Service men, exalted with rotgut, defamed their commander-in-chief—Doster tells of a lieutenant colonel summarily dismissed for disrespectful remarks about the President. Well-meaning critics, amateur and professional, singly and by platoons, had made nuisances of themselves as they eagerly pointed out his shortcomings and sought to instruct him. He had said to one delegation that waited on him:

Gentlemen, suppose all the property you were worth was in gold, and you had put it in the hands of Blondin to carry across the Niagara<sup>2</sup> river on a rope. Would you shake the cable, or keep shouting out to

<sup>2</sup> Blondin was the professional name of Jean Gravelet (1824-1897), spectacular tight-rope performer, who won fame in 1859-1860 by his exhibitions on a rope stretched at a height of 160 feet above the falls of the Niagara.



him: "Blondin, stand up a little straighter—Blondin, stoop a little more—go a little faster—lean a little more to the north—lean a little more to the south"? . . . The Government are carrying an immense weight. Untold treasures are in their hands. They are doing the very best they can. Don't badger them. Keep silence and we'll get you safe across.

He had been cartooned, lampooned, reviled with a frantic malignity. The odious institution of slavery, based on "that cardinal principle of error that any race is without its human claim" and afflictively paradoxical in a so-called "land of the free," had diffused its poison through the whole organic structure of American life. Both the newspaper and periodical press of the North not only had indulged in vulgar personalities but had vaunted insolent sedition and scandalous treason.

There had been private unhappiness and grief; unremitting contact "with importunity which he could not satisfy, and with distress which he could not always relieve"; broken sleep and meals eaten abstractedly, meals too scant for the great frame and the heavy task—for breakfast, an egg and a cup of coffee; for luncheon, a biscuit and a glass of milk. There had been no vacation, no holiday, no change from the plaguy Washington summers—such reliefs had been for Hay or Nicolay or Stoddard but not for "the Ancient."

Gen. Neal Dow, exchanged for Fitzhugh Lee and released from Libby Prison, warned members of the House of Representatives that if another candidate were substituted for Lincoln in the election of 1864 the South would naturally look upon such action as a repudiation of Lincoln's policy and would feel certain that peace, with formal dissolution of the Union, must inevitably follow. Emerson supposed that never before in history had so much been staked upon a popular vote. Yet within Lincoln's own party, some—especially Ben Wade of Ohio and Henry Winter Davis of Maryland—violently attacked the party's nominee. Davis would have much preferred either Wade or Chase, and only reluctantly did he abandon hope of Lincoln's withdrawal.

Nevertheless this "minority President" had been re-elected by a huge popular majority, with 212 out of 233 votes in the Electoral College. The fortunes of war had changed; the struggle was

in its last phase. The "mighty scourge" was to pass away, the burden was to be lifted. Many who, like Garrison, had not understood Lincoln, had now become his friends. Republicans who had informed him that his candidacy was hopeless had been eating their words. Confidence in him was returning to honest but timorous folk who had wavered.

On March 20th, 1865, from camp at City Point, at the junction of the Appomattox with the James, Grant telegraphed to Lincoln:

Can you not visit City Point for a day or two? I would like very much to see you, and I think the rest would do you good.

The President accepted, left Washington on the *River Queen* on the 23rd, reached City Point on the evening of the 24th. While there he lived aboard the steamer but had headquarters in Coloner Bowers' tent, with S. H. Beckwith, Grant's own telegrapher and cipher operator, to keep him in touch with the army and the War Department. He rode Cincinnati, one of Grant's two favorite mounts, around the camp and out into the neighboring country.

Though the visit was to be a "rest," Lincoln found much to do. Grant was maturing plans for a concerted advance, and Sherman and Admiral Porter traveled from North Carolina for a council of war. Both of them were forcibly impressed with Lincoln's desire for mercy to the vanquished. Petersburg fell on April 2nd and on the next day, having written a dispatch notifying Stanton that he was bound for the front, Lincoln rode to a conference with Grant. His ride back to City Point was the last horseback ride he ever took.

When he got there, a telegram from Stanton was delivered to him. "Ought you," challenged the Secretary, "to expose the Nation to the consequences of any disaster to yourself in the pursuit of a treacherous and dangerous enemy like the rebel army?" In his reply, Lincoln said:

Thanks for your caution; but I have already been to Petersburg, staid with Gen. Grant an hour & a half and returned here. It is certain now that Richmond is in our hands, and I think I will go there tomorrow. I will take care of myself.

He did go to Richmond, up the James on the *River Queen*; walked with a small escort to the Confederate Mansion; took two drives through the city; was joyously hailed by the Negroes; suffered no harm whatever, and returned on the 5th. On the 6th he telegraphed to Grant, now close upon the heels of Lee's broken force, that he would soon have to leave for Washington, as Seward had been thrown from his carriage and seriously injured, and other matters required attention.

He insisted upon a tour of the hospitals at City Point, saying he would probably never see the boys again and wished them to know he appreciated what they had done for their country. So he had shaken hands with about 6,000 men—the chief surgeon said the President's arm must surely ache and might be lamed. Lincoln, however, stepped outside, took up a heavy ax that lay there, chopped busily into a log for a few minutes, then, clasping the extreme end of the helve, steadily held the ax horizontal at the full length of his right arm. Not another man there could sustain it in that position.

On the 8th the *River Queen* steamed down the James on the way home. The next day was Sunday. It seemed peaceful now along these waterways, and all was peaceful in the *River Queen's* cabin, for Lincoln guided the talk to Shakespeare. He read aloud from "Macbeth." A small party was there to listen—Charles Sumner and his friend the Marquis de Chambrun, Senator Harlan of Iowa and Mrs. Harlan, Mrs. Lincoln. As he read, he came to Macbeth's lines in the second scene of the third act:

Duncan is in his grave;  
After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well;  
Treason has done his worst: nor steel nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing  
Can touch him further!

He read the passage and then, as Sumner called to mind, he paused. There was the rhythmic beat of the engines, the ruffling of the water—and he went back and read it through again. To Harlan's view the President's melancholy air had been yielding to an expression of serene joy, as if his life's mission had been accomplished. The Marquis would one day ponder strangely

whether the poetry alone had drawn the reader back ("I think nothing equals 'Macbeth,'" Lincoln had written to Hackett) or some premonition had faintly stirred within him.

On the day in 1860 when he had been made candidate of his party, he had stretched out upon a couch in an upstairs room of the house at Springfield. In a mirror—a tilted mirror fixed to a bureau—he had distinctly seen two images of himself, one slightly paler than the other. Next day he had experimented and, finding the effect repeated, decided it could be accounted for by some scientific principle unknown to him. But Mrs. Lincoln had been troubled, believing it a sign that though he would be re-elected he would not live through his second term.

Such incidents were to be retold and embroidered upon in after days. Lincoln was to take on the guise of a prophet—of a survival from the ages when mystics beheld portents and visions.

The *River Queen* moved on, by points and backwaters, up the storied Potomac, bringing the President at the day's end to his capital. There Stanton had received from Grant the message: "General Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia this afternoon on terms proposed by myself."

Lincoln went across to Seward's house on the east side of Lafayette Square. Seward's right arm had been broken close to the shoulder joint and his jaw had been fractured in two places. His head and neck had been encased in a steel frame intended to hold the broken jawbone while it was knitting. This framework, unpleasant though it was to the wearer, became the means of saving his life in a manner which a surgeon would never have imagined. After words of sympathy and cheer, Lincoln told of his visit to Richmond and of Lee's surrender, and with an almost boylike delight hailed the advent of peace. It was the last talk between the President and his Secretary of State, who once had referred to him as "a little Illinois attorney," but who, like Stanton, had grown in process of time to a fuller comprehension.

On Monday morning the town woke to the news of Appomattox. Strangers exchanged congratulations, bands began to strike up, work in government departments was laid aside, the guns of the forts around Washington enveloped it with their booming. Crowds formed and, led by a band, went here and there to ask for



speeches. Hearing a din outside the Executive Mansion, Lincoln stepped to an upper window. To cries of "Speech! speech!" he responded:

My friends, you call for a speech, but I cannot make a speech at this time; undue importance might be given to what I would say. . . . If you will come here to-morrow evening, I will have something to say to you. You have a band with you, and there is one piece of music I have always liked which heretofore has not seemed proper to make use of in the North, but now by virtue of my prerogative as President of the United States and commander-in-chief of the army and navy, I declare it contraband of war and our lawful prize: I ask the band to play "Dixie."

Which the band thereupon did, amid noisy cheers. All day people roved the uneven brick sidewalks and horsemen trotted through the mud.

Not all Washington rejoiced. Confederate prisoners were there in numbers, out on parole. Confederate deserters—and Confederate desertions had been heavy—were there. Sympathizers with the Confederacy were there. "On the day of the taking of Richmond," wrote the Marquis de Chambrun, "I had seen among other things a 'gentleman' purchase a newspaper which contained one of the first telegrams announcing the capture of the town, then crumple it, and throw it violently to the ground." Byron B. Johnson, employed in the War Department, lived on H Street, between Ninth and Tenth. Across his fence a Negro girl, born a slave and working for a family next door, whispered, "Rebel flag in de parlor under de carpet in front." Yet two members of that family were clerks in the Treasury Department, even as Louis Weichmann was drawing a salary in the office of the commissary-general of prisoners. Doubtless when Early threatened Washington in July 1864, many another flag was in readiness to welcome him if he got into the city.

Nevertheless the week beginning April 9th was evidently to be a week of large festivity. The town was to be illumined grandly on the night of the 13th, and on the 14th Anderson would be raising the old banner over the Fort Sumter he had been obliged to relinquish in 1861. Already, on the night of April 4th, Washington had seen the Capitol resplendent with gas-lights innumerable

to the crown of its new dome, while the eastern portico wore upon its stately front a transparency with the words: THIS IS THE LORD'S DOING; IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES. But now, on the 13th, all buildings were to be lighted up; and meantime there were to be parades and serenades—in that ingenuous era the serenade *en masse* was an American rite of public tribute—and what Hay might have called a general hifalute.

A large throng collected at the Executive Mansion on the night of April 11th to hear the promised speech. At a second-floor window Lincoln read from manuscript a carefully prepared address. It had to do with the question of reconstruction in Louisiana and obliquely with the whole problem of reconstruction throughout the entire South. He wished to get the Southern commonwealths once more into their "proper relation" to the Union. "I believe," he said "that it is not only possible, but, in fact, easier, to do this without deciding, or even considering, whether these States have ever been out of the Union, than with it. Finding themselves safely at home, it would be utterly immaterial whether they had ever been abroad."

Thus he urged tact, sufferance. Not everything had gone well in Louisiana but a beginning had been made. "Concede that the new government of Louisiana is to what it should be as the egg is to the fowl, we shall sooner have the fowl by hatching the egg than by smashing it." It was a Lincolnian touch; his audience had been reckoning upon something like that, and it broke into laughter. Details, he went on, could not be worked out by any "exclusive and inflexible plan." "In the present situation, as the phrase goes, it may be my duty to make some new announcement to the people of the South. I am considering and shall not fail to act when satisfied that action will be proper." The crowd looked up at him as he stood there, a kind of nimbus thrown about him from a lamp held beside him as he read; then it scattered into the night. That announcement was never to be heard, nor was Abraham Lincoln ever again to speak in public.

It seems that Marshal Lamon had from time to time been disquieted by an inner conviction of some danger approaching

Lincoln. During the night of November 8th-9th, 1864, after the returns had shown Lincoln's election, Lamon appeared at the Executive Mansion and discussed with Hay the Chief Justiceship; favoring Stanton for the post instead of Chase and thinking—as did Hay—that Lincoln could not well select an enemy like Chase. "He took a glass of whiskey," Hay recorded, "and then, refusing my offer of a bed, went out &, rolling himself up in his cloak, lay down at the President's door; passing the night in that attitude of touching and dumb fidelity, with a small arsenal of pistols & bowie knives around him."

Lamon was now away to Richmond on an errand for Lincoln, but before going he saw John P. Usher, Secretary of the Interior, and asked Usher to induce Lincoln to use greater caution regarding his personal safety, especially about going out in public while Lamon was absent. Lamon and Usher went to call on the President. "Will you make me a promise?" Lamon asked. Lincoln answered carelessly, "I think I can venture to say I will. What is it?"

"Promise me you will not go out at night while I am gone, particularly to the theater."

But this was too much—Lincoln was not inclined to cede proprietary rights to the Marshal, and would say no more than, "Well, I promise to do the best I can toward it."

Ever since that night journey through Baltimore he had had very definite ideas as to this matter. He had lived safely during years of war; had come and gone as his duty had seemed to require; had stood under fire on the parapet of Fort Stevens; had walked the streets of burning Richmond. If anybody really wishes to kill me, he now said to Lamon, "he can do it any day or night if he is ready to give his life for mine."

For several weeks Lamon had been telling Orville Browning (an ex-senator from Illinois) that he believed the President would be assassinated. "But," Browning wrote, "I had no fear whatever that such an event would occur. I thought his life of very great importance to the rebels—he was disposed to be very lenient and merciful to them and to smooth the way for their return to their allegiance. I thought him the best friend they had among those



in authority and that they were beginning to appreciate the fact, and that his life would be dear to them as to us.”<sup>3</sup>

On the evening of Tuesday, March 21st, two days before Lincoln started for City Point, John Booth had left Washington on the 7:30 express. He went to New York, and on his way back stopped over at Baltimore on Saturday the 25th and sent for Arnold, who was in Hookstown at William Arnold's farm. Before Arnold could get to Baltimore by omnibus from the country, Booth, having met O'Laughlin, departed for Washington. On Monday (the 27th) Arnold wrote to Booth the letter of reproof and warning to which reference has previously been made, and in the course of the week, at O'Laughlin's request, he accompanied O'Laughlin on a day's trip to Washington, returning that evening.<sup>4</sup> It was probably then that Samuel Streett, who had known O'Laughlin from boyhood, saw him on "the avenue" (that is, Pennsylvania Avenue) in talk with John Booth. Arnold took the Norfolk boat on the afternoon of April 1st for his job at Old Point with Wharton the sutler. O'Laughlin, according to testimony, was in Baltimore from March 30th to April 12th.

Though evidently reluctant to break with Booth, Arnold had a wholesome respect for Lieutenant Colonel Woolley, General Wallace's provost marshal in Baltimore, and for Major Smith, the chief of detectives. He wished to go to Old Point and knew that everybody going thither from Baltimore had to obtain a pass at the office of the provost marshal. Hence it behooved him not to get into difficulties with Major Smith's men. His own family was uncomfortably inquisitive about his month's absence in Washington, and Hookstown people sometimes asked embarrassing questions. He was truly minded now to "cut loose forever," as he put it, from John Booth's reckless schemes; but in writing to Booth he foolishly sought to appease him with "Time more propitious will arrive yet" and "ere long I shall be better prepared to again be with you": and he signified his readiness to meet John at Barnum's Hotel.

Davy Herold was at home (the Herolds lived on Eighth Street,

<sup>3</sup> Browning's "Diary" (edited by Pease and Randall), vol. ii, pp. 18-19. Browning became Secretary of the Interior in 1866.

<sup>4</sup> Arnold thought this was on Fri., Mar. 31, but P. H. Maulsby, O'Laughlin's brother-in-law, testified that O'Laughlin was in Baltimore on that day.



over near the Navy Yard), collecting rents when they fell due on properties the widowed Mrs. Herold owned, or teasing his sisters, of whom he had no less than seven. Paine and Atzerodt were still hanging about, living pleasantly enough on John's bounty—Atzerodt at the Pennsylvania House, Paine at the Herndon; and John Surratt had set out for Richmond on March 23rd as escort to a Mrs. Slater, who was a Confederate agent of some kind—probably a bearer of dispatches.

Booth was furious at the collapse of his long-fostered design—furious with those of his henchmen who now urged discretion, and more furious because he knew Arnold was right in counseling, "Do not act rashly or in haste." He had denounced Matthews to Chester for being frightened and had talked wildly about ruining Chester if Chester did not take part. At the meeting of March 15th he had spoken to Arnold "in a stern, commanding and angry voice." "Do you know," he had exclaimed, "you are liable to be shot?" Arnold had objected that even if Lincoln were captured, the vehicle would be halted by the sentinel at the bridge. "Shoot the sentinel!" Booth cried—he seemed exceedingly quick on the trigger and quite intolerant of Arnold and O'Laughlin, both of whom argued that if an alarm were given at the bridge, the game would immediately be up. "You can be the leader of the party," Arnold had said, "but not my executioner."

The Booth who had been so even-tempered, who had been, even when in his cups, so wary of entrance to a quarrel, had now grown irascible and out of humor. Old friends like Arnold, Matthews, or O'Laughlin, lackeys such as Atzerodt or Herold or Paine—he was ready to endanger or sacrifice them all, if only he might do this marvelous thing—if only he might deliver up as a prisoner to the South the man whom he held responsible for the South's distress. "You find fault with everything about it," he had snarled at O'Laughlin and Arnold when they pointed out defects in his strategy. The truth was, no doubt, that he himself was beginning to realize that the abduction of a President was a bit more complex than he had supposed.

Obviously his strange cavalcade, if it often appeared in force in Washington's streets, was bound to attract the unfavorable notice of the provost marshal's office. Who could know in advance

whether Lincoln would or would not be accompanied by a detail of the Union Light Guard? The lonely road to the Soldiers' Home, beyond the city limits, would be favorable to a surprise, but of course Lincoln had not yet moved to his summer quarters. The President and Mrs. Lincoln quite often of a Sunday morning walked out New York Avenue to attend the Presbyterian Church (Doctor Gurley's), but they were accompanied by a guard and churchgoers in numbers were abroad at that hour. A guard was always on duty at the marine barracks on Eighth Street (east), near the Navy Yard, and any commotion in that vicinity would quickly rouse an alarm. There were altogether too many guards around the Executive Mansion and at the War Department across the lawn.

After all, perhaps Ford's Theatre would be the most likely spot: so John may have reasoned. He knew every inch of it and its surroundings. Possibly he thought he might count on aid there—from Edman Spangler and maybe others. Spangler was a Baltimorean; he had done carpenter work on the Booth house at Belair and in Baltimore theaters; and when the theater in Washington closed for the summer he went to Baltimore on his vacations, devoted mainly to crab fishing. "In Baltimore," stated John T. Ford, "he was known to be a member of the American Order"—by which presumably was meant the Order of American Knights, successor to the Knights of the Golden Circle. Himself a gymnast weighing 160 pounds, Booth might have reckoned that he and the stalwart Paine could truss up Lincoln; not knowing that Lincoln had been New Salem's champion wrestler and could still perform feats with axes.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, Lincoln for the time being was not in the city, his return was uncertain, and nothing could be done. For economy's sake, John began to get rid of his horses. In case he needed horses, they were always obtainable in Washington at short notice. He was no longer the John Booth of old days, as Mary Ann Booth had evidently seen during his latest visit to New York. On March 28th she wrote him thus:<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> On May 13, 1864, Lincoln in a talk with Hay gave his weight as 180. "Important if true" was the comment in Hay's diary, as if Hay did not quite believe it.

<sup>6</sup> From the original in the archives of the Judge Advocate General.

My dear boy

I have just got yours. I was very glad to hear from you, & hope you will write often. I did part with you sadly—& I still feel sad, very much so. June has just left me—he staid as long as he [*torn*] could. I am now quite alone. Rose has not returned yet. I feel miserable enough. I never yet doubted your love & devotion to me—in fact I always gave you praise for being the fondest of all my boys—but since you leave me to grief, I must doubt it. I am no Roman mother I love my dear ones before Country or any thing else. Heaven guard you is my Constant Prayer

What had been said? What had she sensed that laid a cloud upon her spirit and prompted her to this sorrowful letter with its unaccountable foretokening? We cannot know exactly. When Edwin once, somewhat provoked, had asked John why he did not join the Confederate army, John had answered: "I promised mother I would keep out of the quarrel, and I am sorry that I said so." Had this old topic risen again, or something like it moved John to extravagant avowals? When he had learned that Edwin voted for Lincoln in 1864, he had "expressed deep regret" and declared his belief that Lincoln would become king of America. To Asia he had sung a parody with the words

In 1865, when Lincoln shall be king—

and when Asia had objected, "That will never come to pass," he had jumped to his feet, shouting, "No, by God's mercy—never *that!*" Had there been another scene of the kind—or was it simply that in his general conduct Mary Ann Booth had marked a frantic and evil humor?

Charles Wyndham, who knew both men and may have had the story from Clarke at first hand, told how, in the early days of the war, Booth and John S. Clarke, Booth's brother-in-law, had been on a railway journey together and their chat happened to turn to some news bulletin from the front.

John Wilkes made no reply, but sat opposite with a frown on his face and drumming on the seat with his fingers. Finally Clarke made some disparaging remark about Jefferson Davis.

As the words were uttered Booth sprang up and hurled himself upon Clarke in a wild tempest of fury, catching him by the throat. Other passengers tried to interfere, but Booth held his hold, to all appearances bent upon strangling his brother-in-law. He swung Clarke from

side to side with maniac strength while his grip tightened. His face was drawn and twisted with rage.

Slowly his anger left him and his hold relaxed, none too soon for Clarke. Clarke hardly knew what had happened and looked at his assailant in amazement, gasping for breath. Booth stood over him with a dramatic gesture.

"Never, if you value your life," he said, tensely, "never speak in that way to me again of a man and a cause I hold sacred."<sup>7</sup>

Clarke, it seems, viewed the matter as the result of a temporary derangement. "It was known," Wyndham said, "only to a few friends, who recalled it with painful interest a few years later." This sinister prepossession, dormant for a time, had been awakening to new life during the winter of 1864-1865. It was not surprising that Mary Ann Booth divined something wrong. John Deery did.

John Deery and Michael Geary then had what was probably the finest billiard parlor in Washington. It was on E Street between Twelfth and Thirteenth, on the floor above the entrance to the National (Grover's) Theatre, and had eleven tables and a fully stocked bar. Both of the proprietors were well-known tournament players in their day, Deery holding the American championship. Booth had been used to dropping in there—not to play, for he never lifted a cue, but to watch Deery at practice or shooting a match game, or to sample the establishment's brandy. Deery, about Booth's age, had come to know him as one who never boasted of his career, had none of the "staginess" then frequent in his profession, kept his own counsel, and was most ingratiating in manner. It now appeared to Deery, in these earliest days of spring, that Booth was laboring under a great stress. He was drinking much more freely and at times "seemed a bit crazed," yet he gave no inkling of the nature of the deep turmoil within him.<sup>8</sup>

He was observed, too, at the other end of the avenue. One morning in the Senate chamber the chaplain, the Rev. Thomas Bowman (later a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church), was about to begin the opening prayer when he became aware of a man entering the gallery—a man who was a stranger to him and

<sup>7</sup> *New York Herald*, June 27, 1909; magazine section, pt. i, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Sunday Telegraph* (New York), May 23, 1909.



whom, so far as he could tell, he had never seen before, but whose appearance and behavior at once struck him. At other times he noticed the same man prowling around the Capitol and the Executive Mansion, and was so oddly impressed that he made inquiries as to who the person could be. He was told that it must be Booth the play actor. Of play actors the Rev. Mr. Bowman, true to the Methodist discipline of those days, quite properly knew little; but this particular one had affected him most unfavorably and awakened in him dim suspicions. On April 10th he called to inform the President, but Lincoln smiled, as four years previously he had smiled at Mrs. Lander's story, and said he didn't think anybody would attempt his life.<sup>9</sup>

John looked in as usual at the office of Ford's Theatre for his mail. The engagement of his friend McCullough had closed on March 25th, and on the evening of Sunday the 26th McCullough had left Washington. After the winter's pause, the daily news was of the Northern grip tightening upon beleaguered Richmond; of the doubt whether Lee's army would escape; of Lincoln's visit to City Point, where he would be near to Grant's advance upon the defenses of Petersburg.

On April 1st the restive Booth quit Washington for another week, and on the subsequent Friday he was in New York with his friend Chester at the "House of Lords" tavern on Houston Street, where, to Chester's dismay, he broke out with sudden, irrelevant thunder about how he could have killed the President on March 4th. Between the 1st and the 7th, Petersburg and Richmond had fallen and Jefferson Davis with his government had departed southward; but to minds like Booth's there might still be hope—Davis would establish a remote capital, issue a call for fresh troops, and fight on.

John arrived back in Washington on the 8th and took room 228 at the National. Lincoln, enheartened, was already on his way home from City Point to work out his program of reconciliation and mercy. In John's mail at Ford's was this letter:

Dear Friend John:

Baltimore, April 2<sup>d</sup>, '65.

I have been so *devilishly* unfortunate as to be drafted the other day, and very scarce of funds just at present, (having been put to consider-

<sup>9</sup> New York *Tribune*, Nov. 23, 1903.

able expense by the death of a brother-in-law in Washington and the consequent necessities of his widow and children.) I avail myself of old intimacy to ask if you will be willing to play "Richard" for my benefit at Front Street Theatre on Saturday afternoon next, provided I can get the Theatre. I spoke to Kunkel last night, and he will give me an answer to-morrow. Necessity, *only*, John, induces me to make this request. Mary wishes to be particularly remembered. I trust you will favor me with an early reply, and oblige yours, as ever, in friendship,

J. H. Young,  
Sun Office.<sup>10</sup>

Friends had always felt they could count on John Booth, and the necessitous Young must have been sure that Booth as Richard would be a drawing card. But Booth would never again play Richard, and he was more desperate than Young could have been; for Young would not go to the war—the war was nearly done.

When from the upper window on the evening of April 11th the President addressed in words now historic the loyal group that had gathered to salute him, he dwelt upon what might be learned from the promising experiment in Louisiana, regretting only that the people there had not yet seen fit to accede to his wish that the franchise be granted to Negroes on the basis of intelligence and military service.

There is a story, one bearing the earmarks of trustworthiness, that John Booth and Davy Herold were in the crowd that night. Davy cared nothing about political ideas. (One who had known him from his birth said: "I have never heard him enter into any argument on any subject in the world . . . ; all his conversation was light and trifling.") He did not seek to analyze meaning or purpose when Booth turned to him in a rage and muttered:

"That means nigger citizenship. Now, by God, I'll put him through!"<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> From the original in the archives of the Judge Advocate General.

<sup>11</sup> Frederick Stone, counsel for Herold at the Conspiracy Trial, is authority for this.

## Seven . . . THE FOURTEENTH OF APRIL

ALONG with tidings of imminent peace, spring was coming to Washington City. Judas trees and dogwoods were in bloom and a reassuring mildness filled the air. A wood fire might still be burning in Lincoln's office fireplace, where old-fashioned brass andirons and fender were linked with a white marble Victorian mantel. Yet gardeners were at work outside, and before many days the sojourners in hotel lobbies would be moving to chairs on the sidewalk, townspeople would be sitting on their doorsteps to take the evening breeze, and merrymakers would be going for an outing to the Great Falls.

On April 10th the polished *comédienne* Laura Keene, at one time New York's favorite actress, was opening the second week of an engagement at Ford's. With her, supplementing Ford's own company, were two capable and seasoned actors, John Dyott and Harry Hawk. She appeared on Monday as Miss Hardcastle in "She Stoops to Conquer," on Tuesday as Lady Teazle in "The School for Scandal," on Wednesday as Martha Savage in "The Workmen of Washington" (adapted by Miss Keene from the French, given in New York as "The Workingmen of New York, or, The Curse of Drink" and advertised as "A great moral sensational drama"). The bill for the 13th was "The Story of Peggy, the Actress," with Miss Keene as Peg Woffington.

That morning E. A. Emerson, member of the Ford company, was standing, he said, in front of the theater when John Booth walked up. Emerson had acted with Booth, was well acquainted with him, and said of him, "He was a kind-hearted, genial person, and no cleverer gentleman ever lived." John now was evidently in

a bad temper. He grabbed a cane from Emerson's hand and said: "Ned, did you hear what that old scoundrel did the other day?"

Emerson asked him whom he was talking about, and John flung back:

"Why, that old scoundrel, Lincoln. He went into Jeff Davis' house in Richmond, sat down and threw his long legs over the arm of a chair and squirted tobacco juice all over the place. Somebody ought to kill him." (Lincoln did not use tobacco in any form.)

"For God's sake, John," Emerson interposed, "stop where you are! I'm going to quit you."

At that, John bore down with such force on the cane, which he had been holding across his shoulders by its ends, that it snapped in four pieces. "I still have that cane," Emerson, then in business in Washington, said in 1926.<sup>1</sup>

During the afternoon, Booth looked in at the office of Grover's (National) Theatre, where Acting Manager C. D. Hess and the prompter were in the thick of reading a manuscript. Although he must have seen that they were busy, he entered and took a seat. Hess thought this unusual for John, who ordinarily was the pink of courtesy and would not do such a thing unless invited. This time, however, John not only sat down but insisted on talking. His manner seemed "rather peculiar" to Hess, who finally put the manuscript away. Booth first spoke of the illumination of the city and inquired what the theater would do in that sort, to which the manager answered he would make some display that night but more on the night following—April 14th marking the anniversary of Sumter's fall.

"Are you going to invite the President?" Booth asked.

"Yes," replied Hess—"and that reminds me I must send that invitation." For several days he had been intending to address a note to Mrs. Lincoln.

Stanton issued that day an order proclaiming the end of drafting and recruiting in loyal states, and further announcing that it was the purpose of the War Department to "remove all military restrictions upon trade and commerce so far as may be consistent with the public safety." At three in the afternoon Grant arrived in

<sup>1</sup> New York *Times*, Feb. 14, 1926; pt. 2, pp. 1, 3.



Washington, with Mrs. Grant and his staff, by dispatch boat from City Point, and the statement to the press was that he would go to Philadelphia with Mrs. Grant "probably to-morrow."<sup>2</sup> He put up at Willard's and in the evening visited the War Department in company with Stanton to view the doings. "The crowd espied him," the *Intelligencer* said, "and cheered him vociferously."

The drab building for once was gay. Flags bedecked it from top to bottom; at upper windows reflectors extended the beams of calcium torches; in the center of a blaze of varicolored lights was the flaming word GRANT.<sup>3</sup> On the portico, facing across the lawn toward Pennsylvania Avenue, two bands played alternately, and an exhibition of fireworks capped what was described as "one of the most dazzling scenes of beauty ever witnessed here."

Bonfires gleamed in the streets. In private residences the small-paned windows were filled with lighted candles, which added to secular rejoicing a touch of religious festival. The day was, in fact, that known in England as Maundy Thursday; the morrow would be Good Friday, though Russell, the London *Times'* correspondent, had noted that observance was by no means so thoroughgoing in Washington as at home.

Early that evening Booth came into the billiard parlor on E Street. With him he brought Davy Herold, whom he introduced to John Deery and who seemed to Deery an unintelligent sprig with the manner of a valet. "I was rather surprised," Deery owned, "at his being in Booth's company." Deery had no idea of the set of odd numbers that Booth had been trying to organize. About seven o'clock Booth, drawing out some money, asked Deery to let one of the table boys go downstairs to the box-office of Grover's Theatre and get a box for Friday night. "Aladdin" would be given, with Wallack and Davenport.

"Why do you want to pay for that box?" Deery inquired. "You can have it by going to Len Grover."

"I don't care to accept any favors from the house," Booth replied with finality.

One of the boys went down and presently came back with an

<sup>2</sup> "Personal Memoirs," vol. ii, p. 507. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Apr. 14; p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Intelligencer*, Apr. 14; p. 2.

order for the box specified. Booth and Herold left soon afterward. On recent evenings, Deery figured, Booth had been drinking as much as a quart of brandy in two hours in Deery's place; but that night he did not linger. Where he went is not clear. Washington *en fête* was late in getting to bed, and many persons were up all night. On Friday morning, as he was going off duty, Walter Burton, clerk at the National, met Davy Herold in the corridor.

"Going to see Booth?" the clerk asked, and Davy said he was.

"Well," said Burton, "I don't believe he's in; he didn't come to the desk for his key."

However, the clerk found a maid and told her to open the door of room 228 with her pass key. The bed had not been touched.<sup>4</sup>

Good Friday morning was young when Booth penned this letter to Mrs. M. A. Booth, 28 East Nineteenth Street, New York:

April 14—2 a. m.

Dearest Mother—I know you expect a letter from me, and am sure you will hardly forgive me. But indeed I have had nothing to write about. Everything is dull; that is, has been until last night. Everything was bright and splendid. More so in my eyes if it had been a display in a nobler cause. But so goes the world. Might makes right. I only drop you these few lines to let you know I am well, and to say I have not heard from you. Excuse brevity; am in haste. Had one from Rose. With best love to you all, I am your affectionate son ever,

John.<sup>5</sup>

It was rambling, incongruous; the kind of perfunctory thing he might have written from the academy at Catonsville on a bygone Sunday afternoon—all save that touch of the fury which was driving him on.

New York's *Tribune* declared expansively in its issue of the 14th:

The path of Peace opens pleasantly before us. There may be thorns in the way as we advance, obstacles to be removed, pitfalls and snares to be avoided, but we look back to the dread road we have traveled for four long and weary and painful years, and the road before us smiles only with Summer sunshine. It is natural for man to indulge in hope, and hope is not always illusive.

<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Telegraph* (New York), May 23, 1909. A. C. Clark, "Abraham Lincoln in the National Capital," p. 95. *Sunday Star* (Washington), Jan. 24, 1909.

<sup>5</sup> As printed in the *New York Tribune*, May 1, 1865; p. 4. (Also in the *Herald*, Apr. 30; p. 1, and the *World*, May 1; p. 8.)



*From a photograph in the McLellan Collection, Brown University*

### THE THREE BOOTHS IN "JULIUS CÆSAR"

John (*left*), Edwin (*center*), and Junius (*right*) as they appeared at the  
"Booth Benefit for the Shakespeare Statue Fund," November 25th, 1864





"The fourteenth day of April," wrote Stimmel of the Union Light Guard, "was warm, calm and beautiful, an ideal spring day. All Nature seemed to bask in the warm sunlight of assured peace."

About nine o'clock John Booth, with three companions, entered the barber shop of Booker and Stewart on E Street, where Charles Wood "trimmed his hair round and dressed it." When John was a lad in Baltimore, Wood had given him haircuts. One of Booth's friends now asked Wood whether he had noticed a scar on Booth's neck. "Yes," Wood answered.

"They say that was a boil," the other continued jokingly, "but it wasn't a boil—it was a pistol shot."

Wood, savoring the jest, returned, "He must have got a little too far to the front that time."

"He liked to have lost his head," was the colloquial rejoinder.

More than two years afterward, Wood "thought" he recognized in John Surratt the droll fellow of that April morning, whom he had never before seen. The facts seem, however, to be that Surratt came back from Richmond provided with gold; was in Washington on April 3rd, when he exchanged \$40 in gold for \$60 in greenbacks; and left for Montreal on the morning of the 4th. Evidence given by four persons located him in Elmira, New York, on the 14th.<sup>6</sup>

During the forenoon of April 14th Booth was seen at Grover's Theatre by Helen P. Moss, sister-in-law of C. D. Hess, the acting manager. It has been surmised that John at this time learned that the Lincolns would be unable to attend the evening's performance of "Aladdin." Mrs. Mary J. Anderson, a Negro woman living on the public alley at the rear of Ford's, testified to having seen Booth in the course of the morning "down by the stable."<sup>7</sup>

About 10:30 a messenger from the Executive Mansion arrived

<sup>6</sup> Testimony of Anna E. Surratt and John T. Holahan at the Conspiracy Trial; of C. B. Stewart, John Cass, F. H. Atkinson, and Joseph Carroll at the Surratt Trial (vol. i, pp. 723-728, vol. ii, pp. 729-738). Surratt in a lecture at Rockville, Maryland (1870) said he carried dispatches from Benjamin, Confederate Secretary of State. In the interview in the *Washington Post* (Apr. 3, 1898) he was quoted as stating that he had instructions to report on the plans of the barracks at Elmira, and on the number of Confederate prisoners housed there. Even Louis Weichmann owned that Surratt had gone to Montreal.

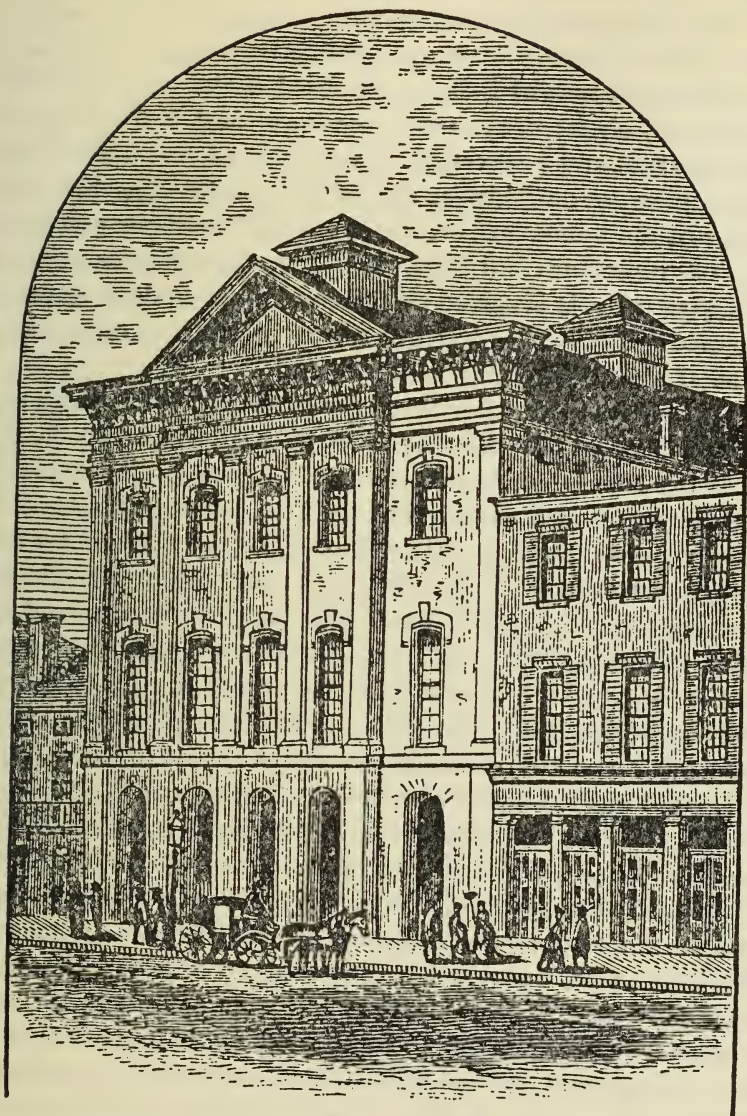
<sup>7</sup> *Century Magazine*, Apr. 1909; pp. 950-953. Mrs. Anderson at the Conspiracy Trial, May 16, 1865.

at Ford's to obtain the "state box" for that night. In this theater the upper two boxes on the right of the auditorium (the left of the stage) were ordinarily divided by a removable partition that could be taken down when Lincoln was to be present, thus making one larger box. Reading notices were forthwith sent to the *Republican* and the *Star*, afternoon papers that would be on the streets about two o'clock. Scattered through the advertisements, brief items apprised the public that LIEUT. GENERAL GRANT (the featured name) and the President "and lady" would attend the benefit and farewell of Miss Laura Keene. To signalize the occasion a new patriotic song, "Honor to Our Soldiers" (music by William Withers, leader of the orchestra; words by H. B. Phillips, one of the Ford "stock"), was to be sung by the Entire Company.

The bill was to be Tom Taylor's "Our American Cousin." This piece, having been first produced by Miss Keene in New York in 1858, was no longer a novelty. Others had appeared in it in Washington—Jefferson in 1861, Kate Denin and Dan Setchell in 1862, John S. Clarke in 1864, John T. Raymond (later famed as Colonel Sellers) in the same year.<sup>8</sup> During her engagement at the Washington Theatre from February 1st to 27th, 1864, Miss Keene herself had presented it four times, and it has been said that Lincoln attended one of these performances.<sup>9</sup> It was advertised that "she alone possesses the original manuscript, all other versions having been surreptitiously obtained and having but a faint resemblance to the original." There was then no copyright protection worthy of the name and piracy was rampant, but Miss Keene's personal following, regarding her as the most finished and refined of English-speaking actresses, still demanded that she keep this authentic version in her repertory. Washington City was used to seeing Lincoln at the theater—he had been at Ford's some half-dozen times that season—but Grant was in effect a stranger and the people were eager for a glimpse of him. Altogether, the theater management must have counted on a brilliant and profitable night.

<sup>8</sup> In February 1865 F. S. Chanfrau had appeared at Grover's in Charles Gaylor's "Our American Cousin at Home," constructed to take advantage of the popularity of Taylor's play.

<sup>9</sup> Clark, "Abraham Lincoln in the National Capital," p. 95. Clark says on Feb. 9, but "The Sea of Ice" was given on that date. "Our American Cousin" was presented on the 5th, 6th, 15th, and 27th.



FORD'S THEATER, IN WASHINGTON.

(From an old wood-engraving. At the right, Tenth Street leads toward E Street; at the left, toward F.)



About high noon, John T. Ford's brother, H. Clay Ford, treasurer and acting manager, was standing in the theater's main entrance. There were five doorways opening from the street. That on the farthest end toward E Street admitted to the stairway leading to the family circle; next toward the north and F Street was the main entrance; and between these two was the box office, with a ticket window on one side for the gallery, on the other for the remainder of the house, and on the east a small window permitting a view of auditorium and stage. At this time of year the main entrance gave the sole access to the lobby, the other three doorways being used as exits only; but in warmer weather all doors except the one at the north end were left open.

As Harry Ford looked up Tenth Street, he saw John Booth coming leisurely down the little slope from F. John paused on the sidewalk in front of the gallery entrance and began to talk with some of the theater's people collected there. One of them—Raybold, the upholsterer—went to the office and brought out a letter for him, and he read it as he sat in the main doorway, occasionally glancing up and laughing as he read. Years later Harry Ford admitted that he then told Booth that the President and General Grant would be at the theater; and, to tease John, he added that Davis and Lee would also be there in another box—and in irons. (Somehow, word had got about on the previous day that Lee was actually in the city.<sup>10</sup>) After half an hour or so Booth sauntered on.<sup>11</sup>

At the corner of Tenth and E he was seen by another Ford brother—James R., business manager of the theater; and he walked the few squares to the livery stable of James W. Pumphrey on C Street, in the rear of the National Hotel. There he engaged a saddle horse, a bay mare, to be ready at about four o'clock. He appears then to have walked down Pennsylvania Avenue to Willard's (at Fourteenth). When Mrs. Grant went in to luncheon in the hotel's dining room, she was followed by "a man with a wild look," who sat down nearly opposite to her at one of the long tables, stared at her continually, and seemed to be listening to what she said. The General came back to the hotel somewhat after two

<sup>10</sup> *Intelligencer*, Apr. 14; p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Testimony of H. C. Ford at the Conspiracy Trial, as printed in the *Washington Weekly Chronicle*, June 10, 1865; p. 4. H. C. Ford's "Reminiscences," *Evening Post* (New York), July 8, 1884. J. T. Ford MSS.



o'clock and Mrs. Grant told him of her experience. "Oh, I suppose he did so merely from curiosity," was the General's answer.<sup>12</sup>

Rumor was that Booth met Thomas B. Florence, editor of the *Constitutional Union*, on Pennsylvania Avenue at some time that day and in the course of talk said that he might be going to Canada soon, as several Canadian managers were offering engagements. If such meeting took place, it must have been as John was going to Willard's or between that time and about half-past two, when he made a brief call at Mrs. Surratt's.<sup>13</sup>

Mrs. Surratt and her boarder Weichmann, who was driving for her, were just ready to leave in a hired rig for the two hours' journey to Surrattsville, where Mrs. Surratt had some business. Booth therefore remained only a few minutes. Not far from three o'clock Mrs. Anderson, the Negro woman who had seen him in the morning, and a Mrs. Mary Ann Turner, who lived next to Mrs. Anderson on the alley, both noticed John chatting with a lady in the doorway of the theater's rear entrance. Rehearsal for that day had been shifted from a morning hour to about two in the afternoon, and the lady must have been one of the cast. Mrs. Anderson said, "I stood in my gate and looked right wishful at him"—thus joining the well-nigh universal feminine tribute.<sup>14</sup>

After "a considerable time," John went into the theater. Members of its staff were busily preparing for the evening. Harry Ford and Raybold the upholsterer were ornamenting the "state box" with flags. Edman Spangler, who had taken down the movable partition, was now on the stage, tinkering with a pair of "flats"—large pieces of scenery set in grooves and shoved into place by scene shifters. Young William Ferguson was making copies of instructions for the stage hands as to changes of scene, lighting (controlled from a "gas-box" near the prompter's desk), and scenic effects generally. Maddox, the property man, was there too; and on seeing John he moved adjournment for a drink.

"No, thanks," John is reported to have said. "I've a touch of pleurisy, and I don't think I'll drink anything."

<sup>12</sup> Horace Porter, "Campaigning with Grant," *Century Magazine*, Oct. 1897; p. 892.

<sup>13</sup> *The Sun* (New York), Apr. 19, 1865; p. 1. (Special correspondence from Washington, dated Apr. 17.)

<sup>14</sup> Testimony at the Conspiracy Trial. W. J. Ferguson, "Lincoln's Death," *Saturday Evening Post*, Feb. 12, 1929; p. 42.

He accompanied Ferguson and Maddox, however, as they went out of the stage entrance, through the passage to Tenth Street, and into the "Star," Peter Taltavull's adjoining saloon. The stage entrance (not to be confused with the back door) was on the O. P. (opposite prompter) side—that is, the southern. You went through a glass door, down a few steps to an alleyway, and then along a corridor to the exit. The corridor was, as a matter of fact, within the adjacent building, and resembled a hallway.

In the saloon, Booth reconsidered and took a glass of ale; and when the three were again outside, he said to Maddox, "Have you got the key?" Ferguson, who mentions this, thought that Maddox either shook his head or answered, "No."<sup>15</sup> It sounded mysterious but undoubtedly referred to the key of the stable in the alley. "Peanuts" Burroughs had always hung this key on a nail behind the theater's back door. Maddox had arranged with Mrs. Davis, the owner, for the rental of the stable and had paid her the rent money as Booth gave it to him. Booth's driving horse and buggy having recently been sold (with the harness) for \$260, the stable now was vacant; but John intended to use it shortly and wished to know where the key was.

From Taltavull's John walked to James Pumphrey's livery stable to get the bay mare he had engaged. He had been used to riding a sorrel horse of Pumphrey's but this happened to have been taken, so he was going to try out the mare—a small, trim animal with black mane and tail. When he asked for a tie-rein, Pumphrey told him not to hitch her, as she had a trick of breaking her headstall. John said he would have to tie her if he stopped to get a drink, but Pumphrey responded, "Oh, you can find plenty of bootblacks about the streets to hold your horse."

"I'm going to Grover's Theatre," Booth said, "to write a letter. There's no necessity of tying her there, for there is a stable in the back part of the alley. I'll put her there." He rode out, and Pumphrey never laid eyes on either him or the mare again.<sup>16</sup>

It does not appear that he went to Grover's. James P. Ferguson, who kept a saloon on the "upper" or northern side of Ford's, saw him and Maddox about this time in front of the theater. They

<sup>15</sup> "Lincoln's Death," *ib.*, p. 44.

<sup>16</sup> Poore, vol. i, pp. 174-175.

were standing beside Pumphrey's mare, and presently Booth mounted, saying (according to Ferguson), "See what a nice horse I have—now watch, she can run just like a cat!" With that he put spurs to the beast and went dashing toward Pennsylvania Avenue. He rode along the avenue in the direction of the Treasury building and at the triangular inclosure between Thirteenth and Fourteenth he saw John Matthews, out for an afternoon promenade. Matthews was to have the part of the unscrupulous agent Richard Coyle in the evening's play.

Booth rode up to the curb and greeted him. Some prisoners had just been marched by—Lee's officers, Matthews thought, but Lee's officers had, as we know, been allowed by Grant to return home on parole.<sup>17</sup>

"Have you seen the prisoners?" Matthews asked.

"Yes, I have," Booth replied; and then, raising a hand to his forehead, broke out with "Great God, I have no longer a country!"

He had with him "a paper sealed and stamped," and this he now requested Matthews to deliver next morning at the office of the *Intelligencer*. Matthews took it, put it in a coat pocket, and, looking out on the avenue, saw a coach passing rapidly toward the Capitol, with Grant visible at a window and luggage piled beside the driver. Recognizing the General, he said to Booth:

"Why, there goes Grant. I thought he was coming to the theater this evening with the President."

"Where?" Booth cried sharply. Matthews pointed, and Booth set out at a gallop after the coach.<sup>18</sup>

As the vehicle held its course eastward, a horseman rode by in the same direction and peered at the occupants. "That," Mrs. Grant said to the General, "is the same man who sat at the luncheon table near me. I don't like his looks." The coach turned left on

<sup>17</sup> Grant, "Personal Memoirs," vol. ii, p. 492. On Apr. 10, from headquarters at Winchester, Va., Hancock had issued orders in which it was stated: "All detachments and stragglers from the Army of Northern Virginia will, upon complying with the above conditions, be paroled and allowed to go to their homes. Those who do not so surrender will be brought in as prisoners of war." (See the *Intelligencer*, Apr. 14, p. 2.)

<sup>18</sup> House Report 7, Fortieth Congress, 1st session (Committee on the Judiciary), p. 782. Surratt Trial, vol. ii, p. 821. Matthews' letter in the *Intelligencer*, July 18, 1867; p. 2. Testimony of John T. Ford, House Report, Fortieth Congress, 1st session, p. 533.

First Street, making for the B. and O. depot at C Street and New Jersey Avenue; but before it had reached the depot, the horseman headed about, rode back, and gazed intently at those within.<sup>19</sup>

Between five and six, Booth came riding into the alley back of Ford's. He hallooed for Spangler, who finally brought out a halter rope and led the horse into the stable. John removed the saddle, locked the stable door (Maddox, who was also there, having presumably fetched the key), and went into the theater. He then invited Maddox, "Peanuts," and Spangler to have a round of drinks in Taltavull's place.<sup>20</sup>

It was near five o'clock when William A. Browning, private secretary to Vice-President Andrew Johnson left the Vice-President's room in the Capitol and walked to the Kirkwood House (at Pennsylvania Avenue and Twelfth Street), where both Johnson and he lived. In his box—it was 67—at the hotel office he noticed a card, and Clerk Robert R. Jones handed it to him. On the card was written:

Dont wish to disturb you  
Are you at home?  
J Wilkes Booth

Browning had met John Booth several times when Booth was playing in Nashville, Tennessee. "It is from Booth," he said to Jones. "Is he playing here?" Browning, as he later stated, had at first some idea of going to call on John. At that time he attached no importance to the inoffensive-looking bit of pasteboard that was to contribute so richly to the Great American Myth.<sup>21</sup>

The grateful spring day was waning into night. At the Kirkwood, the National, and other hotels, guests were beginning to think of dinner. By five, Andrew Johnson was at table. Some, wearied with days of festivity, would, like him, remain indoors and seek a good night's rest. Many would stroll out to have a final

<sup>19</sup> Porter, "Campaigning with Grant," *Century Magazine*, Oct. 1897; p. 892.

<sup>20</sup> Testimony of "Peanuts" at the Conspiracy Trial. Spangler's statement, "The Life of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd," p. 325.

<sup>21</sup> Browning's statement in the archives of the Judge Advocate General, and his testimony at the Conspiracy Trial.



view of the dingy city radiantly transformed. Others would be at the theaters—if they could not get a seat at Ford's, there would be the spectacular "Aladdin" at Grover's, where also the popular Effie Germon would sing and original patriotic verses by Maj. B. B. French would be recited by "a Lady of Washington City."

At the Executive Mansion the President was just getting back from a drive. He had left at about three; as he was coming downstairs had heard the voice of a one-armed soldier: "I would almost give my other hand if I could shake that of Abraham Lincoln"; and had said, "You shall do that and it shall cost you nothing." He and Mrs. Lincoln and Tad were driven to the Navy Yard and went on board the *Montauk*, then lying in the Eastern Branch. She was one of those new ironclad steam vessels devised by Theodore Timby and John Ericsson and called monitors, odd craft with slight freeboard—resembling, to the lay mind, cheese boxes on rafts. The *Montauk* (with a length of 290 feet, a draught of about fourteen, and a crew of about 140 men) had been in the engagement at Fort Fisher, as had the *Saugus*, anchored near; and both showed the marks of combat.

Escorted by the *Montauk's* officers, the President and Mrs. Lincoln made a thorough inspection of the ship. "Both seemed *very* happy, and so expressed themselves," wrote Dr. George B. Todd, the *Montauk's* surgeon, "—glad that this war was over, or *so near* its end." . . .<sup>22</sup> In the carriage Lincoln spoke of the happy life that might yet be theirs when, his second term over, they could get away from Washington (which Mrs. Lincoln always had cordially detested) and return to Springfield.

His had been an active day. He had risen at seven; done a half-hour's work in the office, including the dispatching of notes to Grant and Seward; and, after breakfasting, had passed the morning until eleven in a series of interviews and a visit to the War Department. At eleven the Cabinet met, with Seward absent. Grant was there, and Lincoln told Grant and the Cabinet to look for good news from Sherman. Last night, he said, he had had a familiar dream—one he had repeatedly dreamed prior to some im-

<sup>22</sup> From the copy of Todd's letter to his brother Henry, in the collection of the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

portant event, usually a victory. He had dreamed it before Antietam, Murfreesboro', Gettysburg, Vicksburg. Grant in his blunt, matter-of-fact style interposed that Murfreesboro' (Stone River) was no victory and really of no special importance; but Lincoln, not to be sidetracked, continued that in this instance the dream must pertain to Sherman. The dream was, he explained, of a vessel, singular and indescribable but always the same, moving very rapidly toward a dark and indefinite shore.<sup>23</sup>

(Those interested will find in "George Eliot's Life," by J. W. Cross, an example of how stories may in time be altered. An entry there given from George Eliot's journal tells of the deep impression made by Charles Dickens' version of Lincoln's dream. Dickens, at a luncheon, said Lincoln informed the Council that "something remarkable would happen because he had just dreamt, for the third time, a dream which twice before had preceded events momentous to the nation. The dream was, that he was in a boat on a great river, all alone, and he ended with the words—'I drift—I drift—I drift.' Dickens told this very finely." Did Dickens receive the story in that form? If so, where? Did George Eliot accurately record him?)<sup>24</sup>

After some minor business, discussion veered to the reconstruction of the South. Congress, Lincoln observed, was fortunately adjourned, and the radicals in it could not hamper the necessary work of reviving state governments in orderly fashion. As for persecuting rebels—there must be "no bloody work." By act of Congress, those high in the government or armed forces of the Confederacy were liable for treason; but no one need look to him, he said, to have a part in hangings and killings. "Frighten them out of the country, open the gates, let down the bars, scare them off—shoo!" He brandished his arms as if he were driving chickens from a garden patch. Then he added that he did not sympathize with those who wished to treat as other than fellow-citizens the people of states lately in rebellion. "We must," he said, "extinguish our resentments if we expect harmony and union." Such was the character of his last reported words on this vexed matter.

<sup>23</sup> Carpenter, "Six Months at the White House," p. 292. Gideon Welles' Diary, vol. ii, pp. 281-282.

<sup>24</sup> Edinburgh edition of 1885, vol. iii, p. 113.

Grant lingered for a talk with the President. Between his arrival on Thursday afternoon and the departure of a messenger from the Executive Mansion on Friday morning to reserve the box, the General had at some time accepted for Mrs. Grant and himself "a verbal invitation" to accompany the President and Mrs. Lincoln to Ford's Theatre on Friday evening. But he had already become somewhat embarrassed by the heartiness of his acclaim in Washington.

In March 1864, when he had been formally commissioned lieutenant general, Mrs. Lincoln had arranged a military dinner in his honor, and he had said it would be impossible for him to remain—he must leave for Tennessee. "But we can't excuse you," Lincoln said. "It would be 'Hamlet' with Hamlet left out. Twelve distinguished officers have been invited to meet you." "I appreciate the honor Mrs. Lincoln would do me," Grant replied, "but time is very precious just now—and really, Mr. President, I believe I've had enough of the 'show business!'" That dinner was held, the twelve distinguished officers were on hand, but the General was elsewhere.

So now, when the President remarked that the people would be delighted to see Grant at the play, this seemed, to the General's notion, no inducement whatever. At that point a note from Mrs. Grant was brought in and, after reading it, Grant said he must decide not to remain in Washington Friday night and would start with Mrs. Grant for Philadelphia. It was after two o'clock when he shook hands with Lincoln and bade him good-by.

Endeavors have been made to invest Grant's action with a semblance of mystery and to convey unjustifiable inferences regarding others. Here we must consult the old precept of *cherchez la femme*. Mrs. Lincoln had accompanied the President to City Point in March. She remained there for a week, arrived back in Washington on April 1st, and was a second time at City Point from the 6th to the 8th. On March 26th and 27th, during visits to the Army of the Potomac and the Army of the James, Mrs. Lincoln (according to Badeau, Grant's secretary) caused highly unpleasant scenes; on the second day, in the presence of officers, she insulted both her hostess Mrs. Grant and Mrs. Grant's friend Mrs. Ord, wife of Gen. E. O. C. Ord. "I suppose," she raged at Mrs. Grant,



*Executive Mansion*

*General Grant-*

*Mr Lincoln is indisposed  
with quite a severe headache, yet  
would be very much pleased  
to see <sup>you</sup> at the house, this eve-  
-ning about 8 o'clock & I  
want you to drive around  
with us to see the illumination*

*Very truly  
Mary Lincoln-*

MRS. LINCOLN'S NOTE TO GRANT

(From Badeau's "Grant in Peace." It is an interesting specimen of Mary Lincoln's handwriting.)

"you think you'll get to the White House yourself, don't you?" It was not the first time she had been offensive to Mrs. Grant, of whom she once had demanded, "How dare you be seated until I invite you?"

No doubt, too, the General's lady, facing the ordeal of a box party with Mrs. Lincoln, was understandably piqued at the fact that Mrs. Lincoln had only the day before invited the General to drive about the city and view the lights but somehow had alto-



gether omitted Mrs. Grant. To Mrs. Grant, balanced thus between pride and social duty, entered Mrs. Stanton—"as white and cold and motionless as marble," Hay wrote of her, "whose rare smiles seemed to pain her." On this day she must have been roused. She disclosed that the Secretary and herself had likewise been invited, and wished to know what Mrs. Grant intended to do. "For unless you accept the invitation," she declared, "I shall refuse. I will not sit without you in the box with Mrs. Lincoln!" The First Lady was not popular in official society, and Mrs. Stanton had told Badeau flatly, "I do not visit Mrs. Lincoln."

It seems that Mrs. Grant then and there determined not to attend the play. She sent a note to the General, who, prompt for an excuse, made up his mind not to go without her. About three o'clock Mrs. Stanton was at the War Department, conferring with the Secretary, who instructed her to send regrets. He had often been asked to the theater by Lincoln, he said, but had consistently refused because he thought Mr. Lincoln himself should not go. David Bates asserts that Stanton had personally requested Grant not to attend—thinking, perhaps, that Lincoln might thus be dissuaded from going. This, so far as we may know it now, is the real story of why Grant was not in the box that night. There were no mysterious entanglements as sensational writers have hinted; but Grant (who, Badeau says, "regarded the feelings of others carefully") quite naturally did not unfold to Lincoln the whole truth.<sup>25</sup>

Grant's private car was attached to the train leaving Washington at 4:30 and arriving at Baltimore at 6:10. Maj. H. B. Smith, Gen. Lew Wallace's chief of detectives, was introduced to the General aboard the car, which then was standing on Howard Street, just north of Camden, waiting to be drawn up Howard and along Pratt to the depot of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore. A train leaving Baltimore at 6:35 was due to arrive in Philadelphia at 11.<sup>26</sup> Beckwith, Grant's telegrapher and cipher operator, went along.

<sup>25</sup> Porter, "Campaigning with Grant," *Century Magazine*, Oct. 1897; pp. 891-892. Grant, "Personal Memoirs," vol. ii, p. 508. Carpenter, "Six Months at the White House," pp. 56-57. Badeau, "Grant in Peace," pp. 356-362. Moorfield Storey, "Dickens, Stanton, Sumner, and Storey," *Atlantic Monthly*, Apr. 1930; p. 464.

<sup>26</sup> Time-tables in *Intelligencer* and in "Appleton's Guide."

The President had, as usual, taken a scanty luncheon and then had gone to his office, where he signed the pardon of a deserter, saying, "Well, I think the boy can do us more good above ground than under ground." He also gave an order for the release of George Vaughn of Missouri, a Confederate prisoner sentenced to death as a spy. The drive to the Navy Yard followed.

As the returning carriage swung up the roadway to the portico, two friends from Illinois, Gen. Isham N. Haynie and Governor Richard Oglesby, were just leaving the Executive Mansion. Lincoln called them back and they went up to his reception room, where he read aloud to them four chapters of Petroleum V. Nasby's "Letters," keeping on until dinner was announced at six o'clock. Oglesby and Haynie thereupon bade him good evening. At the close of the meal, about half-past six, his friend Noah Brooks of the Sacramento *Union* happened in and Lincoln told Brooks he had "felt inclined to give up the whole thing" after Grant finally decided not to stay for the box party, but Mrs. Lincoln had insisted that the people ought not to be disappointed.

Before dressing for the theater, the President, attended by Officer Crook of the special guard, walked over to the War Department for a brief visit. A cluster of rough-looking, drunken fellows was hanging around outside the paling, and Lincoln, so the guard recounted, said unexpectedly:

"Crook, do you know I believe there are men who want to take my life?" He paused. "And I have no doubt they will do it," he ended in a lower tone.

He entered the building and went up to Stanton's office. John Potts, the War Department's chief clerk, had once purchased, for use at the grate fires by which the building was heated, such an inferior lot of cast-iron pokers that Major Eckert, chief of the Department's telegraph office, broke four or five of them by striking them across his left arm. Lincoln, who was present, had said, "Mr. Potts, you will have to buy a better quality of iron in future if you expect your pokers to stand the test of this young man's arm." Now, during these his last moments on this second floor where through four trying years he had spent so many hours, he quizzed the Secretary:

"Stanton, do you know that Eckert can break a poker over his arm?"

On the defensive against any of Lincoln's jocularities, Stanton parried bluffly with "No. Why do you ask such a question?"

"Well, Stanton," Lincoln proceeded, "I have seen Eckert break five pokers, one after the other, over his arm, and I'm thinking he would be the kind of man to go with me this evening. May I take him?"

Stanton, resolved not to countenance Lincoln's theatergoing, answered that Eckert could not be spared. "Well, I'll ask the Major myself," said Lincoln easily, "and he can do your work tomorrow."

But Eckert, out of respect for the Secretary and the Secretary's views, thanked the President and said the work was urgent. So Lincoln and Crook walked back together, Lincoln remarking that he did not now care about going out for the evening but would not disappoint Mrs. Lincoln and the audience. Crook said that he "almost begged" Lincoln not to go, and then asked to be permitted to remain on duty and serve as guard at the theater, but Lincoln responded, "No, Crook, you've had a long, hard day's work, and must go home."

They reached the portico of the Executive Mansion and Lincoln began climbing the steps. "Good-by, Crook"—the guard, setting out for his home on Rodbird's hill, was positive of the word—it was "Good-by, Crook," not the wonted "Good-night," that was called from the entrance.<sup>27</sup>

It is strange, but Lincoln had invited many persons that day and all, for one reason or another, had declined. Governor Oglesby and General Haynie had been asked, but said they must be at Willard's for a meeting of the senators and representatives from Illinois. William A. Howard of Detroit (a representative from 1855 to 1861) had been asked but regretted that he had made all arrangements to leave Washington that day. William H. Wallace,

<sup>27</sup> David Bates, whose book was not published until 1907, stated that Eckert was invited during Lincoln's *morning* visit to the Department. This plainly is an error; and Lincoln did not pay an afternoon visit, as Bates made him do in an article in the *Independent* (Apr. 4, 1895). Stanton, too, was mistaken in testifying in 1867 that Lincoln's final visit was on Apr. 12 or 13. His last dispatch was written on Apr. 12.

governor of Idaho Territory, and Mrs. Wallace had been asked but pleaded weariness after a long trip. Robert Lincoln, a captain on Grant's staff and just back from the front, was asked but said he preferred to "turn in early." At the very last, Miss Clara Harris and her fiancé, Maj. Henry R. Rathbone, were invited, and they accepted.

Just as Lincoln was ready, about seven-thirty, to start for Ford's, two visitors detained him—Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House (who had called in the morning) and George Ashmun of Massachusetts, who had been chairman of the Republican convention of 1860 that named Lincoln as its candidate. During the chat with them, Ashmun said that Lincoln's friends had been greatly concerned for his safety on the occasion of his trip to Richmond.

"I would have been alarmed myself," Lincoln replied, "if any other person had been President and gone there, but I did not find any danger whatever."

Ashmun wished, for himself and a client of his, an interview with Lincoln on a matter of business, so the President wrote on a card:

Allow Mr Ashmun  
& friend to come in  
at 9-AM. to morrow  
April 14, 1865    A. Lincoln

These were the last words he was ever to write.<sup>28</sup>

To Colfax he said, "You will accompany Mrs. Lincoln and me to the theater, I hope?" But Colfax had other engagements—next day he was leaving for the Pacific coast. The cards of Senator W. M. Stewart of Nevada and Judge Niles Searles were brought in, and Lincoln sent a memorandum appointing ten o'clock Saturday morning as the hour when he might be seen. As Mrs. Lincoln and he, with Ashmun and Colfax, stepped out under the portico, Stewart and Searles were on the flagging below and Isaac N.

<sup>28</sup> The original is in the Lincoln Museum, Washington.



Arnold, a representative from Illinois, was coming up the walk. "Excuse me now," Lincoln said to Arnold from the carriage, and to Colfax, "I will telegraph you at San Francisco." Burke, the burly Irish coachman, started his team and the carriage rolled away toward the residence of Senator Ira T. Harris of New York at Fifteenth and H Streets. It was close to a quarter after eight.<sup>29</sup>

John Parker, the special guard, was even now on his way to the theater. He was a new man at this job, having been detailed from the Metropolitan Police less than two weeks before. Mrs. Lincoln, with whom Hay had numerous difficulties regarding household management and whom (in a letter to Nicolay) he once described as "getting more Hell-cattical day by day," had seen fit to dismiss the veteran doorkeeper Edward McManus, and Thomas Pendel, one of the original detail of special guards, took McManus' place. The vacancy thus made was filled by Parker, whose record was such that he ought never to have been assigned to this post. After Parker had been repeatedly brought to trial upon sundry complaints, Superintendent Webb on August 3rd, 1863, charged him with general inefficiency, specifying that in a period of about eighty-two days Parker had been absent forty-one. Though the complaint was dismissed, Officer Parker was warned. On April 2nd, 1864, he was charged by Sergeant Skippon of the sixth precinct with being insubordinate, with using disrespectful language, and with gross neglect of duty. He was tried before the Board of Metropolitan Police on April 6th, 1864, and judgment was that he be dismissed from the force. Nevertheless he was reinstated—apparently after Superintendent Richards took office on December 1st, 1864.

Pendel inquired of Parker that evening, "John, are you prepared?"—meaning to find out whether Parker's revolver was in order and handy for use.

"Oh, Tommy, there's no danger," said Alphonso Donn, another

<sup>29</sup> J. W. Starr, "Lincoln's Last Day," "New Light on Lincoln's Last Day," "Further Light on Lincoln's Last Day." Brooks, "Washington in Lincoln's Time," pp. 257-258. Crook, "Through Five Administrations," pp. 65-67, and "Memories of the White House," p. 40. D. H. Bates, "Lincoln in the Telegraph Office," pp. 131, 365-368. Carpenter, "Six Months in the White House," pp. 284-287. Affidavit of H. R. Rathbone before Justice A. B. Olin of the Supreme Court of the District (in the archives of the Judge Advocate General).

doorkeeper, who also had come from the Metropolitan Police and had been a special guard at the Executive Mansion.

"You don't know what might happen," Pendel insisted. Then he said to Parker: "Now you start down to the theater, to be ready for the President when he reaches there. And you see him safe inside." Like Crook, he seems to have been distrustful of a greenhorn on this assignment—especially distrustful, it may be, of John Parker, whom he had known as a patrolman on the force.<sup>30</sup> Parker started at once.

About seven o'clock John Booth was seen to pass out of the National Hotel. At eight he, Lewis Paine, George Atzerodt, and in all probability Davy Herold met in the Herndon House, at Ninth and F Streets, where Paine had been living while Booth paid the bill. It was diagonally across from the Patent Office, in the same "square" as the theater, and only a few steps from the opening into the alley.

In the theater the performance had begun—a quarter to eight was the regular time for the overture. Tenth Street had been alive with the assembling crowd; the house was filled except for the boxes; players and audience were in the best of humor. Harry Hawk, the Asa Trenchard of the evening, felt that things were going smoothly. But glances were directed, we may be certain, at the vacant "state box."<sup>31</sup>



Suddenly, about eight-thirty, there was a halt in the action. In readiness for this moment, the orchestra, William Withers conducting, struck up "Hail to the Chief"; the audience rose, waved handkerchiefs, applauded, cheered. The President came to the front of the box and smilingly acknowledged the cordial welcome. The drama was resumed.<sup>32</sup>

The entire cast seemed in the mood, whether it was Ferguson the call boy, who at short notice was taking Courtland Hess' small

<sup>30</sup> Pendel, "Thirty-six Years in the White House," pp. 37-40. Records of the Board of Metropolitan Police.

<sup>31</sup> Testimony of G. W. Bunker, Surratt Trial, vol. i, p. 329. Atzerodt's statement read before the Commission at the Conspiracy Trial. Doster, "Lincoln and Episodes of the Civil War," p. 269. *Boston Herald*, Apr. 11, 1897; p. 28.

<sup>32</sup> Testimony of H. R. Rathbone at the Conspiracy Trial. Statement of William Withers in the Lincoln Museum. Interview with Mrs. J. B. Wright, *Boston Globe*, Apr. 11, 1915. Statement of Harry Hawk, *Boston Herald*, Apr. 11, 1897.

part of Harry Vernon, or E. A. Emerson, for the first time in the character of Lord Dundreary; or Miss Keene, who, on the authority of the long strip of playbill, had enacted Florence Trenchard "upwards of  ONE THOUSAND NIGHTS .

 Grant's absence could not mar an occasion when all else was so warmly *en rapport*. At the comic passages there were gusts of laughter.

## Eight . . . . . PANDEMONIUM

WHEN Burke the coachman reined in his horses before the theater at about eight-thirty, Charles Forbes, a personal attendant who served as footman, swung down to open the carriage door. A wooden platform or horse block stood at the curb, and the party, having alighted upon this, was convoyed through the main entrance by Forbes and the special guard John Parker. Burke drove forward some ten or fifteen paces toward F Street, then leaning back, elbow resting on the carriage roof, drowsed there, largely oblivious to what chanced around him.

To reach the "state box," the party, with Forbes and Parker, traversed the lobby to its northern end, where there was a staircase to the dress circle; then climbed the stair and, preceded by the usher, James O'Brien, crossed behind the seats of the dress circle to the opposite side of the house. Descending the steps of the dress circle, they came to a door that opened inward upon a small vestibule, about four feet in width by perhaps eight in length. They could not see behind that door a mortise cut roughly in the wall nor, lying near, a wooden bar about two inches square and four feet long.

On the left-hand side of this vestibule was the closed door of box 7; at the vestibule's end the door of box 8 stood open. By that farther door the party entered. Small wonder that in the door to box 7, in the angle of a panel, they did not notice a hole a quarter of an inch in diameter, looking as if made with a gimlet and reamed with a pocket knife. Removal of the partition (which was an inch thick and about seven feet high) had thrown the two boxes into one box of irregular shape and with a frontage of be-



tween ten and twelve feet. A pillar rising from the balustrade divided the face of the box into two lofty arches from which hung draperies of buff satin and curtains of Nottingham lace. The walls were covered with dark, figured paper; the floor was laid with Turkey carpet. In front was suspended what one newspaper styled "a chaste chandelier."<sup>1</sup>

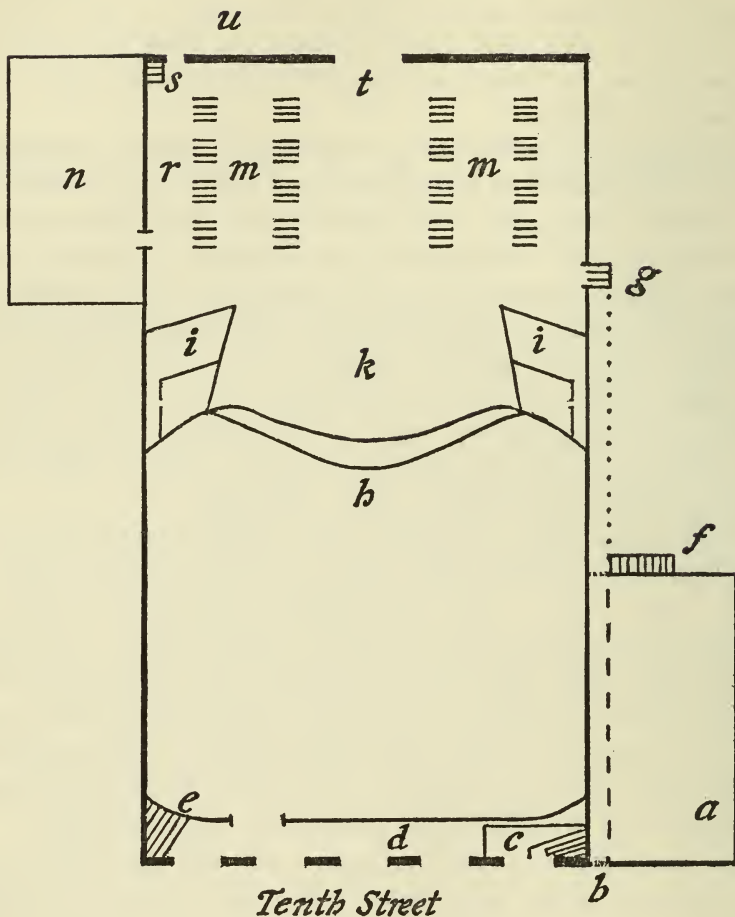
This theater of Ford's was no shabby relic, with an atmosphere heavily compounded of illuminating gas, paint, and the effluvium of audiences long gone. It was less than two years old, embodied the latest ideas in construction and equipment, and was said to possess "all the acoustic and optical advantages of an Academy of Music." Orchestra, parquet circle, and spacious dress circle (first balcony), rising by gradual incline, were provided with cane-bottomed chairs secured to the floor. The parquet circle in theaters of the period was back of the orchestra and under the dress circle. Its name was often shortened to parquet, which originally had been a synonym for pit or orchestra.<sup>2</sup>

In February 1864 a "lounging room" connected with the dress circle had been advertised for use "in the pauses of the entertainment." This room, "richly furnished" and with "all the conveniences and appliances of a modern Drawing Room," was added by cutting through from the dress circle to the second floor of the three-story brick building on the south. The ground floor was occupied by Taltavull; Harry Ford and his brother James had rooms on the third. Joining the stage on the north was a four-story building containing dressing rooms, greenroom, and workshops.

The auditorium ordinarily seated 1,700 but its capacity, in a day innocent of fire laws, could be swelled to 2,300 or possibly even the advertised 2,500. James J. Gifford, who was now on its staff as stage carpenter, was the theater's architect and builder. During construction he encountered a quicksand in the Washington soil, but the walls, from eighteen inches to two feet in thickness, were pushed down to solid ground and the building was considered amply safe.

<sup>1</sup>Testimony of J. J. Gifford, Surratt Trial, vol. i, p. 326. Philadelphia *Inquirer*, Apr. 17, 1865; p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Prices at Ford's on Apr. 14 were: orchestra, \$1; parquet circle and dress circle, 75 cents; family circle, 25 cents; boxes, \$6 and \$10.



## GROUND PLAN OF FORD'S

(After a sketch in the John T. Ford Papers)

*a.* Building adjoining theater on south (Taltavull's)—*b.* Entrance to corridor, leading to footway and thus up steps to stage door, *g*—*f.* Outside stairs—*c.* Office, and stairs to family circle—*d.* Lobby—*e.* Stairway to dress circle—*h.* Musicians—*k.* Stage—*ii.* First-tier boxes—*mm.* Scenes—*n.* Building adjoining theater on north (dressing rooms, green-room)—*r.* Passageway—*s.* Rear door (stairs at left, leading below stage)—*t.* Large door (for bringing in scenery, etc.)—*u.* Public alley.

This night the furniture of the "state box" consisted of a sofa, an armchair on casters, a number of side chairs, and a weighty rocking chair. The rocking chair (belonging to a set with some of the other pieces) was kept in Harry Ford's room and sometimes brought down for the President's use. Harry Ford thought it "a very nice chair." It was of black walnut, and seat, arms, and back were upholstered in red damask. The rockers fitted into the corner at the left-hand end of the balustrade (the end toward the audience), so the chair always was placed there. Lincoln now took it.<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Lincoln was seated at his right, between him and the pillar; Miss Harris at the other end of the balustrade; Major Rathbone at Miss Harris' left, on the sofa against the wall. Rathbone figured a distance of about eight feet between the President and himself, and of about five feet between the President and the door by which the party had entered from the little vestibule. The height of the box above the stage, *including the balustrade*, he loosely reckoned as "about ten or twelve feet." (In the afternoon Edman Spangler had handed up a hammer from the stage to Harry Ford, who was in the box, arranging flags to ornament it.)<sup>4</sup>

Two United States flags were thrown across the balustrade; at either side of the box a fringed United States flag hung from a staff; and in the center, fixed to the pillar, the regimental colors of the Treasury Guard—white spread eagle and stars on a blue ground—drooped above a framed portrait of Washington. The Treasury Guard was composed of employees of the Treasury Department and the colors had been lent for the evening. Surrounded by these impromptu adornments and by the lofty draperies, the four persons in the box sat almost engulfed in shadows.

Ladies differed as to Mrs. Lincoln's costume. "A new spring silk dress, light gray in color and with a black pinhead check, and bonnet to match"—so said Helen Truman, who that night played Augusta. "A black velvet cloak edged with ermine, a black velvet bonnet trimmed with white satin," said Mrs. J. B. Wright, the

<sup>3</sup>Stanton transferred this chair to O. H. Browning, Secretary of the Interior, for safekeeping in that department. For years in the Smithsonian Institution, it was reclaimed by Mrs. H. C. Ford (Blanche Chapman) and sold to Henry Ford, who placed it in the museum of the Edison Memorial Institute at Dearborn, Mich.

<sup>4</sup>Rathbone's affidavit before Justice Olin, Apr. 17. Testimony of H. C. Ford and J. P. Ferguson at the Conspiracy Trial.

stage manager's wife, who, with Dr. and Mrs. Charles Taft, sat in the fourth row of the orchestra across from the box. (She added that both Mrs. Lincoln and Miss Harris kept on their bonnets and wraps.)<sup>5</sup> In any case the First Lady did not wear an evening gown with a headdress of artificial flowers, as ordinarily she did and as we may see her in Kate Helm's portrait of her.

For Miss Julia Chapman, a visitor in Washington, the flags hid all but the "young and lovely" Miss Harris. Miss Harris' fiancé, Maj. Henry R. Rathbone, U. S. A., was likewise her stepbrother and they lived under the same roof—that of Ira Harris, who had taken Seward's place as senator from New York. Rathbone was a slight, smallish man with thick "Burnsides" akin to the whiskers affected by Dundreary in the play.

Although (as Helen Truman said) "the attendance was the best of the season and the house was packed to the walls," nevertheless it happened, as it had on previous occasions (though not frequently), that no other box was taken. Boxes had usually been in demand in Washington. John T. Ford said a box "is not a favorable place to see a performance, but it is a fashionable place here to which to take company." Yet on April 14th the remaining six boxes were vacant, and this fact was to be caught up into the texture of myth that would be ever more thickly spun around the events of that night.

Conductor Withers was expecting that his specially composed "Honor to Our Soldiers," with *solí* and chorus, would be sung between the first and second acts, but Stage Manager Wright informed him through the speaking tube that it must be postponed until the next intermission. Withers was considerably annoyed. He had been jilted that day and already was laboring under a sense of injustice.<sup>6</sup>

The curtain rose upon the second act, bringing Asa to snicker at Mrs. Mountchessington's idea that bison are hunted on the prairies of Vermont, Dundreary to mourn the loss of his hair-dye and ask such riddles as "Why does a duck go under water?" and "Why does a duck come out of the water?" Scene two revealed a

<sup>5</sup> New York *World*, Feb. 17, 1924; p. 8. Boston *Globe*, Apr. 11, 1915.

<sup>6</sup> Toledo *Times*, Feb. 12, 1911.



deep set—the picturesque dairy of Trenchard Manor and a bit of garden, with Mary Meredith <sup>7</sup> (Jennie Gourlay) presiding there and Asa interested “to see how they make cheese in this darned country.” Presently Dundreary (E. A. Emerson) and the delicate Georgina (Miss M. Hart) entered. Dundreary placed Georgina on a rustic bench and Georgina murmured, “Thank you, my lord; you are so kind to me, and I am so delicate.”

*Dun* Now let me administer to your wants. How would you like a roast chestnut?

*Geo* No, my lord, I’m too delicate.

*Dun* Well, then, a peanut; there is a great deal of nourishment in peanuts.

*Geo* No, thank you.

*Dun* Then what can I do for you?

*Geo* If you please, ask the dairymaid to let me have a seat in the dairy. I am afraid of the draft here.

Dundreary’s wartime retort had been:

Oh, you want to get out of the draft, do you? Well, you’re not the only one that wants to escape the draft—

that or something like it. But now the line was:

You are mistaken. The draft has already been stopped by order of the President!

At this, Julia Chapman said, the applause was “long and loud.” It was an impulsive expression of relief that the long stress was over—a friendly greeting to the man in the box, who had fought a good fight and kept the faith.<sup>8</sup>

With the descending curtain, Stage Manager Wright notified Conductor Withers that “Honor to Our Soldiers” must again be deferred, and Withers “became somewhat exercised.”

While this scene had been on, John Booth had led the bay mare by the bridle-rein up the alley to the rear door of the theater. J. L. DeBonay, “responsible utility,” who was playing the servant John Wickens,<sup>9</sup> happened to be standing near the door. After dialogue

<sup>7</sup> The name was erroneously given on the playbill as Mary Trenchard.

<sup>8</sup> Lamon, “Recollections,” p. 282. (Lamon has it that E. A. Sothern was the Dundreary.) Chapman letter (Apr. 16), *Century Magazine*, Apr. 1909; pp. 917-918.

<sup>9</sup> The playbill has Whicker and Pitman gives Wigger.

with Mary Meredith, he had quitted the scene by passing behind the garden fence and out at the third entrance on the right of the stage. The narrow passage in which he was standing ran between the scenes and the wall, and extended from the first entrance, past the door leading to greenroom and dressing rooms, and straight back to the alley door at the rear. As it averaged only about three feet in width, orders were to keep it scrupulously clear for ready access to the stage. Even then it must have been a tight squeeze for actresses in the bulging skirts of the period, such as were worn in "Our American Cousin." There was a similar passage on the O. P. side, but less care was taken of it because decidedly fewer entrances were made from the left. On the left also were stairs to the paint loft and the "flies."

Booth said to DeBonay, with the air of a privileged character, "Tell Spangler to come to the door and hold my horse." Spangler was at his post on the opposite side, ready for his work of shifting or for any emergency. Two scene shifters were on each side and their continuous presence was required by the stage carpenter who directed them. Opening behind the rear door, a covered stairway led to the region below stage. DeBonay went down these stairs, crossed under the stage to the O. P. side, and told Spangler, "Mr. Booth wants you to hold his horse." Spangler left his post, came to the rear door, and, explaining that he could not stay, took the rein. Apparently confident that Spangler would get somebody to care for the horse, Booth passed inside.

He asked DeBonay whether it was possible to cut across to the stage entrance, and DeBonay answered that the dairy scene was now on, taking in the deep stage. Booth descended the stairs and Spangler called to DeBonay, "Tell 'Peanuts' to come here and hold this horse. I haven't time." "Peanuts" Burroughs distributed handbills for the theater and was stage doorkeeper. He was now sitting at his door, right by the first entrance on the left. DeBonay followed Booth under the stage and up on the other side; Booth then going out of the stage entrance, through the alley, and into Taltavull's saloon, while DeBonay, after delivering Spangler's message to "Peanuts," went by the alleyway to the sidewalk in front of the theater.

"Peanuts" crossed under and argued with Spangler about hold-

ing Booth's horse. "He told me to hold it," "Peanuts" said later, "and if there was anything wrong to lay the blame on him; so I held the horse." John Booth, in his suasive fashion, had already interfered with the peaceful routine of Ford's, and Edman Spangler, stagehand and crab fisher, would rue this night and his compliant but unsuspecting part in it. "Peanuts," sprawled on a carpenter's bench that stood in the alley, held the mare and perhaps thought of the tip that Mr. Booth would give him. Mr. Booth was in Taltavull's, where he had called for whisky instead of the customary brandy. He then asked for a "chaser" of water and laid his money on the bar.

The curtain fell upon the long dairy scene, and the act was over. Louis Carland, the theater's costumer, was on the O. P. side, where he saw Gifford, the stage carpenter, talking to Spangler, and presently Conductor Withers and John Dyott (the Abel Murcott of the evening) strolled up and asked Gifford and Carland to join them in a drink. As they went into Taltavull's place, Booth was going out. In less than two hours the purloins of Ford's would appear to have seen a flood of miscellaneous tippling.

Coachman Burke was roused from his dozing by "two of my friends," who suggested that he have a glass of ale with them. He thought this was at the close of the first act. Leaving "a man" (a stranger, presumably) to care for the horses, he was gone for as much as ten minutes by his own count—no doubt longer. Returning, he took his place on the driver's box, but where his friends were is not shown. With astonishment we learn from Burke that they were the "special police officer and the footman of the President"—John Parker and Charles Forbes. Both of them, therefore, were absent from their posts during an intermission, when it would seem that their presence was specially needed, and both were drinking while on duty.<sup>10</sup>

"Our American Cousin" had another act, with seven scenes. We do not know what Lincoln thought of the play. To Harry Hawk it looked from the stage as if "Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln enjoyed it so

<sup>10</sup> Testimony at the Conspiracy Trial. Spangler's statement, "The Life of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd," p. 325. Testimony of L. J. Carland and F. P. Burke, Surratt Trial, vol. i, p. 571; vol. ii, p. 792. Burke's statement in the archives of the Judge Advocate General.

much." Dr. Charles Taft, army surgeon, writing of what he had glimpsed from his seat in the orchestra's fourth row, said that Mrs. Lincoln often called the President's attention to this or that upon the stage and "seemed to take great pleasure in witnessing his enjoyment." On the other hand, Thomas H. Sherman, at one time secretary to James G. Blaine, declared Lincoln was "so shielded by draperies he could be seen from the floor only when he leaned forward."<sup>11</sup> Helen Truman said she had always noticed that, whereas Mrs. Lincoln applauded a performance by hand-clapping, Lincoln did not, though he would laugh heartily on occasion.

This work of Taylor's has survived in a few old prompt books and a wretchedly printed version from battered plates dated 1869. Walt Whitman—who was not at Ford's that April night (though it has been stated that he was) but may have seen the play elsewhere—wrote of it as "A piece . . . in which, among other characters, so call'd, a Yankee, certainly such a one as was never seen, or the least like it ever seen, in North America, is introduced in England, with a varied fol-de-rol of talk, plot, scenery, and such phantasmagoria as goes to make up a modern popular drama." . . .<sup>12</sup> Since Whitman, others have made disparaging remarks about it, judging it by its literary quality.

It was originally written for Joshua Silsbee, American comedian popular in London, but was not used by him. The allegedly impossible Yankee plainly derives from sources as reputable as Dickens' "Martin Chuzzlewit" and "American Notes," but such ingratiating touches were added that he was as much to the taste of American audiences then as "The Man from Home" was later. Not he, however, but Lord Dundreary, prototype of all "silly ass" stage Englishmen, gave "Our American Cousin" its vogue in the United States. Under the name "Lord Dundreary" it was revived by E. H. Sothorn at the Lyric Theatre, New York, January 27th, 1908, and had a successful run. Perhaps Lincoln, with his wartime experience of Britain's governing class in the persons of Lord Lyons, Lord Robert Cecil, and Lord John Russell, found amusement in this satire by an editor of *Punch*.

<sup>11</sup> See their accounts in the *Century Magazine*, Feb. 1893, and the *World* (New York), Feb. 12, 1926.

<sup>12</sup> Bucke, Harned, and Traubel (eds.), "The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman," vol. ii of *Prose Works*, p. 248.



But Lincoln's mind, as Gamaliel Bradford felt, "was rather on the coming dreamy years than on the play." We will go to Europe, he said to Mrs. Lincoln, go to the Holy Land—to the city I always have wished to see, Jerusalem. It was a supplement to his talk in the carriage on the afternoon's drive. He got up once and put on his overcoat, as if he felt a chill air blown across him.<sup>13</sup>

John Booth had been in and out of the lobby several times. He had come up to Buckingham, the doorkeeper, and asked, "What time o' night is it?" Buckingham told him to step in where he could see the clock. A little while afterward he crossed the lobby, entered the house, scanned the audience for a moment, and went outside again. In a short time he returned, looked in at the box-office window, then put an arm through and laid on a shelf there a partly smoked cigar. To Harry Ford, who was in the office, he said in mock-heroic style:

Who'er this se'gar dares displace  
Must meet Wilkes Booth face to face.

Harry recognized this as an extempore parody of lines in W. B. Rhodes' burlesque "Bombastes Furioso," which had held the stage for a half-century. General Bombastes hung his boots on a tree and affixed to them a scrap of paper bearing the words:

Who dares this pair of boots displace  
Must meet Bombastes face to face.  
Thus do I challenge all the human race.

John Booth did not complete the tristich, but his was a defiance as inclusive as Bombastes' and equally reckless. Buckingham mechanically extended a hand for a ticket, and John took the hand by two fingers. "You don't want a ticket, Buck," he said, and passed on up the stairway to the dress circle, humming a tune.<sup>14</sup>

The curtain had risen upon the first scene of the third act, with the dairy set retained. Action on the stage neared the crux of the drama, Asa's burning of old Mark Trenchard's will. Asa was the

<sup>13</sup> "The Wife of Abraham Lincoln," *Harper's Magazine*, Sept. 1925; pp. 496-497. Rathbone's affidavit.

<sup>14</sup> Buckingham, "Reminiscences and Souvenirs," p. 13. New York *Evening Post*, July 8, 1884 (interview with Harry Ford, from the *Washington Star*). Personal statement by Blanche Chapman (Mrs. H. C. Ford) to the present writer.

legatee and Mary Meredith came into £80,000 when he destroyed the will. Mary (Jennie Gourlay) and Asa sat *vis-à-vis* on a bench at right center, and Asa, having thrown away the stick he was whit-tling, brought the dialogue round to old Mark and entered on the longest speech in the play. Most of the audience was listening raptly as Asa said, "Will you excuse my lighting a cigar?" and continued:

"Give me the light," says he. Wal, I gave him the candle that stood by his bedside, and he took the sheet of paper I was telling you of, just as I might take this. [*Takes will from pocket.*] And he twisted it up as I might this. [*Lights will.*] And he lights it just this way, and he watches it burn slowly and slowly away.

Sitting there on the bench, Jennie Gourlay raised her eyes to the dress circle and in the glow of the dimmed house-lights saw John Booth. He was at the end of the foyer behind the dress circle, on her left as she looked diagonally across from the stage. It was not surprising to see him there—he had the freedom of the house, but Jennie Gourlay was "shocked at his pallor and a wild look in his eyes." He must be ill, she thought.<sup>15</sup>

In the passage back of the dress circle, not far from the door of the vestibule to the "state box," were Lieut. A. M. S. Crawford of the Veteran Reserve Corps and his friend Capt. Theodore McGowan, assistant adjutant-general to Gen. Christopher C. Augur, commanding the military department of Washington. Having come in just after the President arrived and having viewed the box from the dress circle's left side, they had moved over to the right side and, like others, had taken extra chairs there provided for those who had been unable to get regular seats.

In the early part of the third act's first scene, a gentleman had passed them. He was inquiring for Charles Forbes, the attendant and footman, whose appearance was familiar to Washingtonians generally and who was sometimes referred to as "the President's messenger." Forbes was in seat 300, the one nearest to the vestibule door, and somebody pointed him out. The gentleman handed Forbes an official-looking envelope and left the theater. He was S. P. Hanscom, editor of the *Daily National Republican*, who said

<sup>15</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, Apr. 27, 1914.

he had been asked at the Executive Mansion to give the "dispatch" to the President. A scene being on, he delivered the envelope to Forbes instead.

Now another intruder appeared, and McGowan and Crawford were again broken in upon. This man, Crawford said, had black hair, black mustache, dusky eyes, and was wearing a dark felt hat. Crawford at first thought him to be drunk, but quickly noted a peculiar "glare in his eye." The man picked his way by and stepped down one step. There he paused, surveying audience and stage. The scene had changed and the stage had been "closed in" with flats to show a room in Trenchard Manor. The interval from the scene to the middle of the footlights was about twenty feet. In the center of the back wall was a doorway hung with portières, behind which was a set piece to mask the opening. Mrs. Mountchessington (known to Asa as the "old gal"), Miss Augusta Mountchessington (out for Asa's money), and Asa (now without a fortune) were on the scene.

The dark man stood looking. Then he took from a pocket what seemed to be a number of visiting cards and with rather punctilious care selected one. He stepped down the next step of the aisle, which brought him to the right side of Charles Forbes, and, bending over Forbes, held out the card. *What was on that card? Was the card taken into the box by Forbes, or did Forbes on his own responsibility give the dark man permission to enter the box?* We shall probably never know for sure the answers to these questions. The attention of both Crawford and McGowan was diverted to the stage. When next they turned to glance at the dark man, they saw him entering the vestibule, whose door he closed behind him.<sup>16</sup>

Laura Keene, with young W. J. Ferguson, was waiting in the first right-hand entrance. She had been gratified at the smooth performance because in the audience were not only the President and Mrs. Lincoln but also friends of John Lutz, Miss Keene's manager and second husband. On the other side, DeBonay, having returned from the front of the theater, was leaning against the flat, waiting

<sup>16</sup> McGowan's account, *New York Tribune*, Apr. 17, 1865, *Commercial Advertiser* (New York) and *Philadelphia Inquirer* of that date. Crawford's statement in the Tanner Papers, Union League Club, Philadelphia.

for the curtain to fall on that scene. In the third entrance on the right, Miss Jennie Gourlay was talking with Conductor Withers. Miss Gourlay was the leading lady of the Ford stock company and the following night was to be her benefit night, with "The Octoroon" as the attraction. Withers had just learned from Stage Manager Wright, in the second entrance, that "Honor to Our Soldiers" would be rendered at the close of the performance and was on his way to the orchestra pit *via* the passage under the stage. Edman Spangler was immediately in back of the doorway in the scenery.<sup>17</sup>

James P. Ferguson (restaurant keeper on the "upper" side of Ford's), who was in the front of the dress circle opposite the "state box," said Lincoln "was leaning his hand on the rail, and was looking down at a person in the orchestra,—not looking on the stage. He had the flag that decorated the box [at his left] pulled around, and was looking between the post and the flag." The flag hung at such an angle that it would have partly obscured his view. According to Ferguson, General Burnside took an orchestra seat about this time; and Ferguson surmised that it was Burnside at whom Lincoln was gazing. Mrs. Wright, the stage manager's wife (fourth row in the orchestra), said that the President was "leaning slightly forward, with his arm on the cushioned edge of the box, his chin resting in his hand," and was "looking into space as if in deep thought."<sup>18</sup>

The brave old Flag drooped o'er him,  
 (A fold in the hard hand lay,)—  
 He looked, perchance, on the play,—  
 But the scene was a shadow before him,  
 For his thoughts were far away.

(H. H. Brownell)

<sup>17</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, Apr. 27, 1914. *New York Tribune*, Feb. 6, 1916. Clark, "Abraham Lincoln in the National Capital," pp. 107-108. *New York Times*, Apr. 18, 1915. *Saturday Evening Post*, Feb. 12, 1929. Testimony of DeBonay and Withers at the Conspiracy Trial, of Raybold at the Surratt Trial. Spangler in "The Life of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd," pp. 325-326.

<sup>18</sup> Poore, vol. i, pp. 190-191. Surratt Trial, vol. i, pp. 129-131. *Dorchester (Mass.) Beacon*, Apr. 11, 1896.—Burnside was reported as making an address in Nassau Street, New York, at three o'clock the following afternoon, which would raise a question as to Ferguson's accuracy in this particular.



On the stage, Mrs. Mountchessington (Mrs. Muzzy) said to Augusta (Helen Truman), "Augusta, dear, to your room."

*Aug* Yes, ma. The nasty beast! [*Exit*]

*Mrs M* I am aware, Mr. Trenchard, you are not used to the manners of good society, and that alone will excuse the impertinence of which you have been guilty. [*Exit*]

Asa (Harry Hawk) was the only figure on the scene. He was standing a little back of the line of the boxes, and behind him was the curtained doorway. Miss Clara Harris and her fiancé were intent upon Asa's soliloquy. William Withers' orchestra was mute, and neither behind the footlights nor in all that thronged house was an ear sensitive enough to catch from offstage the eerie strains of the *danse macabre*.

*Asa* Don't know the manners of good society, eh? Wal, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old gal—you sockdologizing old man-trap!

Mary Lincoln laughed. Instantly there was a sound like the report of a firearm, muffled but distinct. Hawk thought it came from the property room. Then at the front of the President's box he saw a man brandishing a knife.

Shouting words that Hawk did not understand, the man was over the balustrade. He landed upon the stage in a kneeling posture, about two feet out from the lower box next to the footlights, making a long rent in the green-baize stage carpet. Harry Ford in the ticket-office had heard the shot and, opening the little window that gave on the parquet circle, he saw the man crouched to the stage. He could not guess what had happened, nor could Buckingham, the doorkeeper, who, through the doorway from the lobby, got sight of the man crossing toward the "prompt side"—crossing rapidly, with a gait that Mrs. Wright described as "like the hopping of a bull-frog," flourishing the knife as he went.

Hawk had backed away and run from the scene, up the stair leading to the flies. The man disappeared into the first entrance. All had happened with an incredible swiftness. Smoke drifted out of the President's box. For a moment the greater part of the audience sat as if in a trance.

Abruptly, from within the box, a piercing scream rang out—and the house became an inferno. “There will never be anything like it on earth,” declared Helen Truman. “The shouts, groans, curses, smashing of seats, screams of women, shuffling of feet and cries of terror created a pandemonium that must have been more terrible to hear than that attending the assassination of Cæsar. Through all the ages it will stand out in my memory as the hell of hells.”

At the instant when the man came over the balustrade, James Ferguson had seen the President raise his head—“and then it hung back.” From the same point of vantage (the dress circle opposite the box) W. H. Taylor had distinctly seen Lincoln try dazedly to rise. Others, too, had seen these things, or Mrs. Lincoln clutching at the President’s arm, or Major Rathbone beside the President’s chair.<sup>19</sup>

The huge J. B. Stewart, member of a law firm with offices on Pennsylvania Avenue and said to be the tallest man in Washington (overtopping “long Abraham” by some two inches), had clambered upon the stage and gone dashing after the fugitive. He had been sitting well forward in the orchestra and had moved with surprising agility, calling, “Stop that man!” Close on Stewart’s heels went young James Knox, from the second row of orchestra chairs quite near the box.<sup>20</sup> Knox got lost in the scenery and came back. Voices from the box asked for brandy and a surgeon. Dr. Charles Taft, army surgeon in uniform, began to fight his way to the stage, while his wife cried, “You sha’n’t go! They’ll kill you, too—I know they will!” As he was lifted from stage to box, the cape was torn from his overcoat. A pitcher of water was handed up.

There were shouts of “Hang him!” “Kill him!” Chairs were torn from their fastenings. Many persons were in tears. Actors and actresses were jumbled in confusion on the stage with those of the

<sup>19</sup> Affidavits of Miss Harris and Major Rathbone. *Washington Star*, May 16, 1865. *Washington Weekly Chronicle*, May 20, 1865. *Boston Globe*, Apr. 11, 1915. *Boston Herald*, Apr. 11, 1897. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Apr. 22, 1865. *New York World*, Feb. 17, 1924.

<sup>20</sup> At the Conspiracy Trial, Stewart testified that he was in the front row of orchestra seats on the right-hand side. The record of his testimony at the Surratt Trial has: “Q. You were on the opposite side of the stage, as I understand, from that on which Booth jumped. A. Yes; I was on the right-hand aisle, I should judge about twenty feet from the extreme right-hand side of the stage [*i.e.*, looking toward the audience]” (vol. i, p. 127).

audience who kept mounting it. Some of the musicians had left their instruments behind them. Mrs. Wright put her foot through a 'cello that she seems to have been trying to use as a ladder.

Doorkeeper Buckingham unfastened the other doors from lobby to street. "Buck," said Harry Ford, "step out to the curb and get Mayor Wallach—you'll find him there. Ask him to come in and request the people to leave the theater." Wallach finally reached the stage and from it announced what already was generally known—that the President had been shot. He asked the audience to leave as quietly as possible. Tenth Street was rapidly filling with a crowd. Soldiers of the Veteran Reserve Corps arrived and, using the butts of their guns, made a lane to 453, the house of William Petersen, across the way. Doctor Taft had decided that it would be fatal to drive the wounded Lincoln over the cobbles of Pennsylvania Avenue to the Executive Mansion.

Down the stairway from the dress circle, men came bearing the unconscious figure. Weeping and wringing her hands, Mrs. Lincoln followed, assisted by a Major Potter and by Major Rathbone, whose left upper arm dripped blood as he walked. Behind them was Miss Harris. Buckingham held open a door for the sorrowful procession. When it had passed out, he turned to note Laura Keene, who stood there in the lobby, her back to the ticket window. As if she were treading the boards, she exclaimed in her clear tones, "For God's sake, try to capture the murderer!"

Armed soldiers explored the house, in which the lights had been first dimmed to induce the crowd to leave and then raised to give Superintendent Richards of the Metropolitan Police an opportunity for inspection. In dress circle and family circle stragglers yet lingered. "Get out of here!" the soldiers ordered. "Get out of here! We're going to burn this damned building down!"

A detail of the Union Light Guard cleared and patrolled Tenth Street between E and F and remained during the night. Sergeant Stimmel, wakened from a heavy sleep, felt that this must be an awful nightmare—that he could not really be on duty. Word flew about that Secretary Seward and Frederick Seward had also been wounded, perhaps mortally, by a man who somehow had forced his way into the Seward house on Lafayette Square. He was said to have been one Boyle, notorious desperado and guerrillero; or



Sattuck, a well-known Maryland rebel; or a ruffian named Thomas; or the dark bravo who had shot the President. At the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police, 483 Tenth Street, entry was made that he was "supposed to be John Serratt [*sic*]." "What news of Stanton?" was a common question. "Have they got him, too?" Could it be, men wondered, that Southern emissaries in Washington had planned this thing—that paroled Confederate soldiers and disloyal civilians would at a signal endeavor to seize the government? Couriers dashed hither and yon through the muddy streets.<sup>21</sup>

Having filed what he supposed would be the night's last dispatch, Lawrence Gobright, correspondent of the Associated Press, was sitting in his office at the Metropolitan Hotel when in rushed a gentleman who had been present at Ford's and who gave him an account of what had happened there. Holding this gentleman firmly as a news-source too valuable to lose, Gobright sallied forth. He went to the telegraph office, sent a brief "special" with promise of further details soon, visited the theater, ranged about town, gleaned little but an impression of chaos and alarm. Everywhere was dread of an extensive conspiracy, of some further stroke.

Thousands in Washington sat up all night. "There were rooms waiting for us," wrote Julia Chapman, "but it seemed safer to be together." So far as Gobright was able to discover, it was not then known with certainty who had shot the President. Some appeared sure it was John Booth, but others said that they knew John Booth and that the dark man had no more than a superficial resemblance to him. In Lieutenant Crawford's opinion he had "very strongly resembled the *Booths*"—but Crawford ventured nothing less indefinite than that. Rumor was persistent that it had been *Edwin* Booth. Unconvinced in his own mind, Gobright waited until morning should bring something official.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Testimony of George D. Mudd at the Conspiracy Trial. New York *Tribune*, Apr. 17, 1865; p. 1. New York *Herald*, Apr. 19; p. 1. Photostatic copy of police blotter, Lincoln Museum. The *National Republican* of Mar. 3 had queried the desirability of having "so large a number of men, who until recently have been aiding the leaders of the rebellion, let loose in the community."

<sup>22</sup> Gobright, "Recollections," pp. 348-354. Argument of General Ewing in the case of Doctor Mudd, Conspiracy Trial. Testimony of John T. Ford, Conspiracy Trial. M. B. Field, "Memories of Many Men," p. 328.



Whoever he might have been, some thought the murderer was lurking in the city. Lincoln had been shot, it was alleged, either in the breast or just back of the temporal bone. After the President had been carried from the box, many persons had entered it out of curiosity and looked around. One man had picked from the floor a "derringer" pistol six inches long and weighing a half-pound—a weapon that might easily fit into a man's pocket or a lady's reticule. On the butt was the lettering DERINGER, PHILAD.—and Deringer (from the name of the maker) is the correct spelling, found in various works on small arms.<sup>23</sup> The finder, William F. Kent, handed the pistol to Gobright, who turned it over to Superintendent Richards.<sup>24</sup> Across the street, in the house of the tailor Petersen, surgeons were probing for the bullet.

All night long Sergeant Stimmel, not yet twenty-three, gradually realizing that he was truly awake, rode slowly up and down in front of the Petersen house. All night the vigil was kept there, with comings and goings but no sign of hope. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, who had been there since eleven o'clock, stepped outside for a walk in the open air. Every few rods, knots of people, distressed and alarmed, had collected, and the white-bearded Secretary was constantly beset by their inquiries. Before he had returned, a little after six o'clock, a cold rain began to fall—a rain such as fell at Springfield when Lincoln bade farewell to his neighbors with "I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return." A special dispatch to the New York *Tribune* said: "The President expired at a quarter to twelve." It was one of a host of rumors.

Relieved from duty about seven o'clock, Sergeant Stimmel went to breakfast. As he lay asleep, that cheerless morning, the bells of Washington were tolling.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> A. C. Gould, "Modern American Pistols and Revolvers," pp. 26-30. C. W. Sawyer, "United States Single Shot Martial Pistols," p. 33.

<sup>24</sup> Surratt Trial, vol. i, p. 123.

<sup>25</sup> See further: Surratt Trial, vol. i, pp. 125-127. *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, Feb. 7, 1917; p. 407. *Washington Star*, Apr. 14, 1903; p. 2. *Leslie's Weekly*, Mar. 26, 1908; p. 302. *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, Jan. 1927; pp. 31-32.

## Nine . . . . . TERROR BY NIGHT

THE wounded President had been borne up the curving steps of Petersen's house to the second floor, and through the hall to a room in an extension at the back—a small room measuring seventeen feet by nine and a half. Here a low walnut bedstead was drawn out from the wall and Lincoln was placed on it—diagonally, because of his height. At the left of the hallway as one entered were front and back parlors, with folding doors between them. In the back parlor Stanton established himself; and in Washington that night there seems to have been no cooler head than his. Aided by Chief Justice David Cartter of the Supreme Court of the District, he started in to take depositions regarding the murder.

Longhand was found too slow for the purpose, and Corp. James Tanner was summoned from an adjoining house. Tanner, who had lost both legs in the war and become an employee in the ordinance bureau of the War Department, was an accomplished shorthand writer. It was about midnight when he sat down at a table with Stanton and Cartter, and his work was frequently interrupted as reports were delivered or when the Secretary halted the testimony to issue orders. Though the folding doors were closed, the moans and sobs of Mrs. Lincoln could be heard plainly from the front room. In rare moments of silence the President's labored breathing sounded through the hall, rising and falling like an æolian harp—in Sumner's phrase, "almost like melody."

Occasionally Stanton would go for a few moments to Lincoln's bedside. Once when he came back and took his seat, Tanner

looked up at him with unspoken question, and marked the choke in the throat—the slow, forced answer, “There is no hope.” “He had impressed me through those awful hours as being a man of steel,” Tanner afterward wrote, “but I knew then that he was dangerously near a convulsive breakdown.”<sup>1</sup>

Assistant Secretary Charles A. Dana discovered his chief “in full activity.” Dana, who afterward became nationally known as editor of the New York *Sun*, declared in 1896 that he “never knew a man who could do so much work in a given time” as Stanton did.

“Sit down here,” Stanton said to Dana that night. “I want you.”

Then he began, Dana related, “and dictated orders one after another, which I wrote out and sent swiftly to the telegraph. All those orders were designed to keep the business of the government in full motion till the crisis should be over. It was perhaps two o’clock in the morning before he said, ‘That’s enough. Now you can go home.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

A midnight dispatch from Maj. Gen. M. C. Meigs (Quartermaster-General) to Gen. Christopher Augur, commanding the military district of Washington and the 22nd army corps, said that the Secretary ordered that “troops turn out; the guards be doubled; the forts be alert; guns manned; special vigilance and guard about the Capitol Prison.”<sup>3</sup> There were Confederates and Confederate sympathizers in the Old Capitol. During a portion of the night, Augur was at the Petersen house in conference with the Secretary. Four men remained on duty all night in the telegraph office of the War Department, and relays of mounted messengers conveyed Stanton’s bulletins and instructions. We have learned something about wartime Washington and can realize that it lacked not only such facilities as telephones, radios, and teletype machines but even multiplex telegraphy or the bicycle. Hence we shall not be beguiled into judging by artificial and impossible standards the labors of Stanton and his aides in those first hours of shock.

As Justice Cartter propounded questions to the witnesses, Tanner noted down the answers in Standard phonography. Various

<sup>1</sup> “The Passing of Lincoln” (Remarks of Hon. James A. Freer); pp. 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> “Lincoln and His Cabinet”; pp. 26, 68-69.

<sup>3</sup> Official Records (“The War of the Rebellion”), I, vol. xlvii, pt. 3; p. 756.

persons were brought in who had been either at Ford's or in the neighborhood of Seward's house on Lafayette Square. Under pretext of delivering medicine for Secretary Seward from Doctor Verdi, a man in a light overcoat had gained entrance to the house. Having fractured Frederick Seward's skull, he forced his way into the bedroom of the Secretary, whom he twice stabbed in the neck. The Secretary's life was saved by the steel frame around his broken jaw. After wounding Frederick's brother, Maj. A. H. Seward, the man rushed downstairs, mounted a horse, and escaped into Vermont Avenue.

Tanner wrote to his friend Walch (April 17th) that through the testimony of all who had been at the theater ran "an undertone of horror" which kept them from identifying the dark man explicitly with John Booth. Among them was Harry Hawk, the Asa Trenchard of "Our American Cousin," who already had given evidence at police headquarters and been put under bond to appear at ten o'clock Saturday morning.

"To the best of my belief," Hawk said, "it was Mr. John Wilkes Booth—but I will not be positive."

Hawk knew well enough it was John, as he admitted in a letter written on April 16th.<sup>4</sup> But he could not bring himself to be the accuser. Nor, although he had walked about the streets amid the wild excitement, could he quite make this thing seem true. His scene had been ruined. ". . . And to think," he wrote, "of such a sorrowful ending!" They led him to the door of the little room and asked him whether he recognized the unconscious Lincoln as the man who had been shot.<sup>5</sup>

Tanner commenced transcribing his notes into longhand. He saw Mrs. Lincoln, supported by Miss Harris, pass through the hallway toward the front parlor and heard her moan, "O my God, and have I given my husband to die!" (" . . . I tell you," he wrote Walch, "I never heard so much agony in so few words.") He wrote on and on; could not believe it when his watch said four-thirty; finished at a quarter to seven. Then he went into the little room, where some twenty persons were grouped about the bed.

<sup>4</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Apr. 22; p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *American Historical Review*, Apr. 1924; pp. 514-517. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Apr. 22, 1865; p. 2. *Boston Herald*, Apr. 11, 1897; p. 28.



He saw Robert Lincoln with head bowed on the shoulder of Charles Sumner—Surgeon-General Barnes with hand upon Lincoln's failing pulse, ear bent at intervals to catch the lessening heartbeat—Stanton with muscles twitching and gaze fixed intently on that worn face across which was settling a "look of unspeakable peace." At length the measured breathing grew slowly fainter and the sound of it ended, as if a harpist laid

. . . his open palm

Upon his harp, to deaden its vibrations.

By the official record of Dr. Ezra W. Abbott the time was seven twenty-two on the morning of April 15th.

The Surgeon-General gently folded Lincoln's arm over the still breast. "Our Father and Our God," said a voice lifted in prayer. It was the voice of the Rev. Phineas Gurley, pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. Tanner snatched out notebook and pencil—the point of the pencil caught in his coat and broke. Sobs were audible. The Rev. Mr. Gurley said "Amen," and made pause. Then Stanton quietly summed up the moment in enduring words—words of prescience, words such as the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart: "Now he belongs to the ages."

Of course the mythmakers have implied that Stanton uttered nothing of the kind; but that is how it was recorded by John Hay, a young man with rather a quick ear for turns of speech. Corporal Tanner gives "He belongs to the ages now"; Dr. Charles Taft, "He now belongs to the Ages." Both of these men were present, as was Hay. The Marquis de Chambrun has "He is a man for the ages," and this he may have obtained from his close friend Charles Sumner, who was present.<sup>6</sup> "He now belongs to the ages" is how Frank Flower puts it in his biography of Stanton, thus substantially agreeing with Taft. Possibly the remembered form—the "lapidary style," as Sam Johnson might have said—is Hay's; but it is clear that Stanton did say something like this. That he may also have said other things is beside the mark.

It has likewise been insinuated that Stanton, for no clearly defined reason, tried to keep John Booth's name out of Saturday

<sup>6</sup> "Personal Recollections of Mr. Lincoln," *Scribner's Magazine*, Jan. 1893; p. 38.

morning's papers. If he did, he signally failed. Before twelve-fifteen the New York *World* had received this dispatch from Washington:

Everybody who knows the man, say [*sic*] that J. Wilkes Booth, the actor, is the assassin. The evidence is concurrent at this late excited hour to that effect.

The thirteenth special dispatch to the New York *Tribune*, dated at Washington on Friday, said: "There is one universal acclaim of accusation resting upon J. Wilkes Booth as the assassin." The fourteenth (one-thirty, Saturday morning) was: "The mass of evidence to-night is that J. Wilkes Booth committed the crime." In the New York *Herald* appeared one Washington dispatch saying that "Popular report points to a somewhat celebrated actor of known secession proclivities as the assassin" . . . and another to the effect that Laura Keane and the orchestra leader (William Withers) had recognized the man as "J. Wilkes Booth, the actor." Washington's *National Intelligencer* stated in its third Saturday edition:

Developments have rendered it certain that the hand which deprived our President of life was that of JOHN WILKES BOOTH, an actor.

In its second edition the *Morning Chronicle* proclaimed John Booth as the murderer. By Sunday morning the name had traversed a continent, for readers of that day's *Daily Alta California* encountered, along with the shocking news of the murder, the announcement: "The murderer of the President was J. Wilkes Booth." Californians had known, esteemed, and applauded three of the Booth family. (While General Sherman was discussing with Gen. J. E. Johnston the terms of Johnston's surrender, it was thought best to withhold the tidings from the armies.)

Corporal Tanner, making phonographic notes in William Petersen's back parlor, impulsively felt that in fifteen minutes he "had testimony enough down to hang Wilkes Booth, the assassin, higher than ever Haman hung." This in spite of his admission that the witnesses shrank from positively identifying the dark man. In the light of evidence now available regarding that night's confusion and uncertainty, we may well think it to Stanton's credit

that he was not stampeded. At three o'clock Saturday morning—only four and a half hours after the murder—his official bulletin to General Dix in New York read:

Investigation strongly indicates J. Wilkes Booth as the assassin of the President. Whether it was the same or a different person that attempted to murder Mr. Seward remains in doubt.

Dix was to transmit this to the press. It was as far as Stanton then cared to go publicly—and it was quick work. The whole suggestion that the Secretary of War was *particeps criminis* in the accomplishing of Lincoln's death, and that he hoped to make it possible for Booth to escape before a general alarm could be given, is as inapt as it is malicious.

Tanner went back to his room to write out for Stanton a second longhand copy. In a little while he heard a stir beneath his window and, on looking out, he saw the hearse with Lincoln's body move gloomily through the rain up Tenth Street toward F, the military escort marching with arms reversed. It was the real beginning of the long journey that Whitman was to immortalize in "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." Involuntarily Tanner's hand went to his forehead in salute.

Sixty years later the same Tanner, meantime twice made commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, remarked that never did he feel more like hitting a man in cold blood than when "a sprig of a reporter" said to him with a smirk: "So you were really at Mr. Lincoln's deathbed? It must have been an interesting occasion." "I certainly would have smote him," Tanner protested, "if I had had the physical ability."

Gen. W. E. Doster stood at the corner of Fifteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue as the hearse passed to the Executive Mansion, the body shrouded with a white sheet and a flag. "And never before or since have I heard a crowd as that was, composed mostly of negroes, men and women, utter so loud and piercing a wail as these mourners uttered, when the body passed close to them. It seemed as if the whole world had lost a dear, personal friend, whose loss was not to be repaired."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "Lincoln and Episodes of the Civil War"; p. 36.

Men wept as they met in the street. One of Sergeant Stimmel's comrades of the Union Light Guard encountered another cavalryman, a stranger from a different troop, and the two reined in their horses and spoke of the events of the night. "It probably means more to me than it does to you," the stranger said, as if excusing his tears. "He signed an order that saved me from being shot."

As the night had worn away, evidence pointed ever more surely to John Booth as the dark man of the theater. Superintendent Richards of the Metropolitan Police conducted a "preliminary examination" at headquarters. "Several persons were called upon to testify," said the *Daily Morning Chronicle* of April 15th, "and the evidence, as elicited before an informal tribunal, and not under oath, was conclusive to this point: the murderer of President Lincoln was John Wilkes Booth." Among those whose names were entered in the "incidental book" during the night were J. B. Stewart and J. S. Knox, who had started after the murderer; the actors Hawk and DeBonay; Maddox, the theater's property man; and John Fletcher, foreman of Thompson Nailor's livery stable (299 E Street, north).

Men from the War Department went to Booth's room at the National Hotel. Among the things they found there were a pair of cassimere trousers, a pair of embroidered slippers, a half-filled bottle of hair oil, some killikinick tobacco, and a trunk. Papers taken from the trunk included a cipher code that was discovered to be identical with one picked up by Assistant Secretary Dana at Richmond on April 6th in the abandoned suite of J. P. Benjamin, Confederate Secretary of State. Among the correspondence Booth had left behind was Sam Arnold's letter of March 27th, from Hookstown, regarding the abduction plot. All this material was turned over to the office of Col. Prentiss Ingraham, provost marshal-general of the defenses north of the Potomac.

Sam Arnold was not unknown to Maj. H. B. Smith, chief of detectives and assistant provost marshal-general of the Middle Department, with office in Baltimore. As soon as the authorities in Washington wanted Arnold, Major Smith and one of his operatives went out to Hookstown, which they reached about noon of



the 16th. There they learned that Arnold had gone to Old Point—and the remainder was simple. In Smith's office a register was kept of all to whom passes for Old Point were issued. Arnold was on the register, vouched for by "Wickey" Wharton, sutler at Old Point. A dispatch was sent to Wharton, asking where Arnold was. "A clerk in my employ," Wharton replied. Arnold was arrested, reached Baltimore by the Bay Line steamer on April 18th, and was immediately delivered in Washington by Smith and Officer Babcock. McPhail, the civil provost marshal of Maryland (having to do with enrolments and drafts, and independent of the regular military service), had telegraphed to Assistant Secretary Dana at two-forty on the 16th for orders to arrest Arnold, but by that time Smith had acted.<sup>8</sup>

Such is the real story of the procedure in Arnold's case, about which some queries have been raised. It is of peculiar interest to us for two reasons. It shows how from the beginning the loosely co-ordinated agencies then existing were prone to work independently of one another—sometimes influenced, no doubt, by lively expectations of tangible reward. Also it reveals the complete lack of any official distinction between the abduction plot and the affair of the murder. This indiscriminative bias was to result in grave injustice to individuals, and it promoted confusion in the public mind.

If by daylight of the 15th the guilt of John Booth was reasonably sure, nevertheless his whereabouts remained uncertain. There were several ways by which such a fugitive might conceivably get out of Washington: the Baltimore turnpike; the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, to Baltimore and northward; the Long Bridge, from the foot of Maryland Avenue to Alexander's Island on the Virginia shore; the Navy Yard bridge, crossing the Eastern Branch from Eleventh Street (east) to Uniontown; Benning's bridge, spanning the Eastern Branch a little higher up; the Aqueduct bridge from Georgetown to the Virginia side, connecting with roads leading toward Leesburg and Richmond; the ferry to Alexandria. Wartime vigilance at bridgeheads and other points had been greatly relaxed. On the 14th two gentlemen had importuned

<sup>8</sup> Smith, "Between the Lines"; pp. 292-294.

Lincoln for a pass to Richmond and he had written upon a card:<sup>9</sup>

No pass is necessary now to authorize any one to go to & return from Petersburg & Richmond—People go & return just as they did before the war.

A. Lincoln

As early as the 1st the *Intelligencer* had given notice:

NO PASSES REQUIRED.—On and after to-day, no more passes will be required to visit Alexandria.

Tanner informs us that Stanton's repeated direction from Petersen's was: "Guard the Potomac from the city down. He [Booth] will try to get south."<sup>10</sup> But many suspected—and quite naturally—that Booth might have headed for Baltimore; so at three o'clock on the morning of the 15th Stanton prepared this dispatch to Gen. William W. Norris, commanding the Baltimore district:

Make immediate arrangements for guarding thoroughly every avenue leading into Baltimore, and if possible arrest J. Wilkes Booth, the murderer of President Lincoln.<sup>11</sup>

(A sidelight upon the conditions under which Stanton worked is afforded by the fact that although this dispatch was marked to be rushed, it was not put on the wire until three fifty-five.)

Chief Young of New York's detective force, with officers Elder, Kelso, and Radford, took the first train to Washington on Saturday morning for the purpose of aiding in the capture. Before they could reach there, a dispatch from the capital announced that the murderer had been arrested north of the city.<sup>12</sup> Late that afternoon the *National Republican* of Washington said:

#### BOOTH CAPTURED.

We learn that BOOTH, the supposed assassin of Mr. LINCOLN, has been captured, and has been transferred to absolutely safe quarters.

<sup>9</sup> Original in the Lincoln Museum, Washington.

<sup>10</sup> "The Passing of Lincoln"; p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Official Records, I, vol. xlv, pt. 3; p. 775.

<sup>12</sup> *Commercial Advertiser*, Apr. 15; 1st ed. (1:30 p.m.), p. 1—2nd ed. (2 p.m.), p. 3.

It was false, but no more so than scores of flying reports, mis-statements, and innuendoes. A fictional accretion had begun to collect, and its growth has never ceased. To the canards of news-mongers, the errors of the misinformed, the inventions of partisans, the perjuries of lying witnesses, have been added the delusions of cranks and the impostures of humbugs. So far as lapse of time and defects of evidence permit, we must try to recover something of the truth—or at the least, something of the probabilities.

“Evidently conspirators are among us!” the *Intelligencer* editorially proclaimed. “To what extent does the conspiracy exist? This is a terrible question! We can only advise the utmost vigilance and the most prompt measures by the authorities. We can only pray God to shield us, His unworthy people, from further calamities like these!”

Writing to his brother, Dr. George Todd, surgeon of the *Montauk*, said:

Today all the city is in mourning, nearly every house being in black and I have not seen a smile. No business, and many a strong man I have seen in tears.<sup>13</sup>

Solomon Faunce, a governmental clerk, wrote home:

... You can form no idea of the excitement that exists on the street. We were dismissed at 10 o'clock this morning—in fact we couldn't have done anything if we had undertaken it. I don't think the nation has had such a gloomy day during its existence. Our stores, dwelling-houses, and public buildings are all draped in mourning. The shock is terrible. . . . Perhaps the South thought that they were doing themselves some good in this killing Mr. Lincoln but I tell you that as soon as Andrew Johnson the Vice-President comes in they will find their mistake. For he goes in for *hanging every son of them*. And Bully for him! That's what I say, and as for Booth, *tear him to pieces*.<sup>14</sup>

Major Gleason, a clerk with Louis Weichmann in the office of the Commissary-General of Prisoners, went early to the office, “where I found confusion, no work doing, and all discussing the calamity.” During the night he had visited General Augur's headquarters in company with Lieut. Joshua Sharp, an assistant pro-

<sup>13</sup> From the copy in the possession of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>14</sup> From the original in the McLellan Collection, Brown University.

vost marshal on Augur's staff. There, too, they had discovered "everybody excited and confusion reigning." "If there was any cool-headed man there," Gleason wrote, "he was not in sight—nor is it to be wondered at, the shock was so great the mind was dazed and numb." "Such a night of horror," that morning's *Intelligencer* declared, "has seldom darkened any community. The indefinite dread which conspiracy inspires seized on the public mind, and suspicion, apprehension, and agony pervaded the people."

A dispatch of the 14th to the *Tribune* from its Washington bureau read: "Ten thousand rumors are afloat, and the most intense and painful excitement pervades the city." That "Col. Parker of Gen. Grant's staff" was the Lincolns' guest in the box; that the President and Mrs. Lincoln did not leave for the theater until 8:45 o'clock; that Lincoln had a "ball-hole in his forehead"; and that there was little hope of Seward's recovery (although neither Doctor Verdi nor Surgeon-General Barnes, both of whom were at once summoned, had even implied such a thing)—these were among the unverified reports which the same bureau telegraphed to New York. They were but precursors of the vast medley of error that was to issue from Washington for months to come.

Measures had been taken by the local authorities to preserve the outward semblance of public order. Superintendent Richards had promptly telegraphed to every precinct and all streets were patrolled. At the Superintendent's request General Augur furnished mounts for the police. The Kirkwood House, where Vice-President Johnson had room 68, had been placed under special guard. Men of the Veteran Reserve Corps, commanded by Major Steckner, took charge of the theater, using the lounging room for a dormitory. Alarmed by threats to fire the building, Edman Spangler, who usually bunked in the theater and rarely slept in a bed, made a shakedown in the carpenter's shop in the four-story annex. He and other employees now had to carry military passes to go in and out. Many persons were wildly convinced that the theater was in some way bound up with the murder and that Lincoln had been invited with this purpose in view.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the 15th, in his room at the Kirkwood, Andrew Johnson was sworn in as President of the



United States by Chief Justice Chase. In his brief inaugural address he said:

. . . The only assurance I can now give of the future is reference to the past. The course which I have taken in the past in connection with this rebellion must be regarded as a guaranty of the future. . . . The best energies of my life have been spent in endeavoring to establish and perpetuate the principles of free government, and I believe that the Government in passing through its present perils will settle down upon principles consonant with popular rights more permanent and enduring than heretofore. . . . I feel that in the end the Government will triumph and that these great principles will be permanently established.<sup>15</sup>

At twelve, Johnson attended a meeting of the Cabinet and, so far as the fastidious Gideon Welles could observe, "deported himself admirably."<sup>16</sup> It is, in passing, worthy of notice that Lincoln, though styled "Old Abe" (sometimes affectionately and sometimes not) and though referred to by himself in 1861 as already "an old man," had just entered his fifty-sixth year in February 1865 and thus was actually younger than Johnson, who had been born in December 1808.

In the dismal light of that rainy Saturday morning, Mary Lincoln was led from the front parlor of Petersen's to her carriage. Her gaze fell upon the theater she had entered so happily less than twelve hours before.

"Oh," she cried, "that dreadful house—that dreadful house!"

Shut from the world, sunk in a frantic and despairing grief, she stayed on for a time in the Executive Mansion that to her had never been a home. In the stress and clamor of ensuing days she was well-nigh forgotten.

Trains between Washington and Baltimore were searched. On the night of the 15th, troops surrounded the Booth homestead at Belair, which had been rented to a Baltimore family named King. Dwelling and farm buildings were thoroughly explored.

"John Booth is not here," said Mrs. King, vexed at the abrupt

<sup>15</sup> "Messages and Papers of the Presidents," vol. vi, p. 305.

<sup>16</sup> "Diary," vol. ii, p. 289.

intrusion. "But if he were, you would have found him an honored guest."

"Madam," was the answer, "it is well for you that we have not found him here."<sup>17</sup>

The *Daily Chronicle* of the 15th stated:

As it is suspected that this conspiracy originated in Maryland, the telegraph flashed the mournful news to Baltimore, and all the cavalry was immediately put upon active duty. Every road was picketed, and every precaution taken to prevent the escape of the assassin.<sup>18</sup>

The New York *Herald* of April 16th carried this Washington dispatch of the previous afternoon (twelve-thirty):

John Wilkes Booth, towards whom the evidence conclusively points as the assassin of the President, has been arrested near Baltimore, and will be placed for safe keeping on board a Monitor at the Navy Yard here, which will be anchored in the stream.

The indignation of the people is so intense that an attempt to confine him in any prison would lead to a sanguinary conflict between the people and the guard.

Ten minutes before this dispatch had been filed, Gen. James A. Hardie had telegraphed from Washington to the agent of the military railroad, Alexandria:

It is reported that the assassin of the President has gone out hence to Alexandria, thence on train to Fairfax. Stop all trains in that direction. . . .

On the same day (the 15th) Gen. W. L. Jeffers, signing as Acting Provost Marshal-General, telegraphed that it was believed the assassins of the President and Secretary Seward were attempting to escape to Canada. His instructions accordingly were that all persons seeking to cross into Canada be thoroughly examined and any deemed suspicious be arrested.

Marshal McPhail, apparently on his own initiative, was sending word to St. Inigoes, far down the Potomac, that Booth should be looked for in St. Mary's and Calvert Counties; and General Augur, commander of the Washington district, was ordering General Slough at Alexandria to send a squad of cavalry down toward the

<sup>17</sup> E. V. Mahoney, "Sketches of Tudor Hall and the Booth Family"; p. 50.

<sup>18</sup> See also the *Commercial Advertiser* (New York), Apr. 15.

Occoquan River to intercept anybody crossing the *upper* Potomac from the region of Piscataway in Lower Maryland.

On the night of the 14th Major Gleason, fellow clerk with Louis Weichmann in the office of the Commissary-General of Prisoners, went into a small room in which members of the staff were consulting at Augur's headquarters and recommended that Weichmann and the entire Surratt household be arrested. "I also asked," he wrote, "for a cavalry squad to go with me to the Surratt place in Maryland, as I thought the assassin would escape that way." But they said he "could be of more assistance in Washington."<sup>19</sup>

Time was passing, and army men were divided in councils; but soldiers like Gleason, knowing that Stanton was in charge, were convinced that everything possible would be done. They thought the Secretary arrogant, churlish, and inhuman, but they felt, as Gleason did, that "he was a man of sound judgment as well as iron will; in other words one who could be depended on in a pinch." They knew him for a driver. When Halleck had wished three months for moving Hooker's two corps from Virginia into Tennessee, Stanton said fifteen days. "It can't be done," Halleck told him. "It can be done and by the will of God it shall be done," Stanton countered, thumping the desk; and it was done.

Advised by Stanton to "search and patrol the roads leading from Washington, particularly in the direction of the Occoquan," Augur sent a detail of cavalry to Piscataway in Prince George's County, Lower Maryland. This detail was commanded by Lieut. David Dana, provost marshal in the third brigade of the 22nd army corps and brother to Charles A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War. Lieutenant Dana and his men must have left Washington at a very early hour on Saturday morning, for they reached Piscataway at seven o'clock. From there Dana reported that arrangements had been made which would render it impossible for fugitives to cross the Potomac at that point. He also sent a messenger to notify the small cavalry post at Chapel Point, below Port Tobacco, that the President had been murdered.

<sup>19</sup> *Magazine of History*, Feb. 1911; p. 64.

On Saturday a variety of persons began to take up the chase into Lower Maryland. Among them were Superintendent Richards of the Metropolitan Police; Maj. James O'Beirne, provost marshal of the District of Columbia; Maj. John Waite of General Augur's staff; and Col. H. H. Wells, provost marshal of the defenses south of the Potomac. (Provost marshals in bewildering array confront us on every hand.) By the best accounts, 1,400 cavalrymen were scattered over this area to patrol the wretched roads, question close-lipped residents, and (dismounted) scour the marshy tracts that fed creeks and sluggish rivers. It was supposed that Booth might perhaps have sought temporary refuge in one of those wastes of thicket, quagmire, and black water.

Strangers to the terrain, men of the Sixteenth New York and Eighth Illinois, and even more unwelcome Negro troops, ranged the largely hostile peninsula. John Young, chief of New York City's detectives, was there with some of his operatives. Other sleuths were furnished by Major O'Beirne; by Col. H. S. Olcott, special commissioner of the War Department, later a founder of the Theosophical Society; and by Colonel Ingraham, who lived to write six hundred paper-back novels but none so thrilling as the true story of the pursuit of John Booth.

By Monday morning (April 17th) the New York *Herald* was saying:

The miscreants who assassinated Mr. Lincoln and attempted the life of Secretary Seward are still at large. The military and police authorities of Washington and all over the country are actively engaged in attempts to effect their capture, and they should be assisted in every possible manner by every citizen. Let each man resolve himself into a special detective policeman, sparing no vigilance or labor until these detested wretches are hunted down and secured for justice. It is a duty which every man owes to his conscience and his country.

Zealous but misguided patriots already were assuming this duty in the most indiscriminate fashion.

Meanwhile, Secretary Stanton had ideas of his own. At three-twenty on the afternoon of Saturday, April 15th, this telegram had left the War Department:<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Official Records, I, vol. xlvi, pt. 3; p. 783.



Col. L. C. Baker, New York:

Come here immediately and see if you can find the murderers of the President.

Edwin M. Stanton,  
Secretary of War.

During that Good Friday night of dismay and terror, and the days and nights of the following week, all sorts of fictions began to take shape; and fictions have been so increasing and so ramifying through the years that anyone surveying with some little degree of care the general topic of Lincoln's murder would easily become satisfied that in written form as well as in popular tradition the erroneous and the mendacious have in bulk considerably exceeded the accurate and the true. When it was difficult or impossible to arrive at the truth, the probable seems generally to have been elbowed out in favor of the unlikely.

It was rumored among the populace that it had been Davy Herold who held Booth's horse in the alley that night. ("Peanuts" Burroughs, with his bruised head and no tip, knew better.) Maunsell B. Field, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, said that at first the impression was prevalent that Lincoln's wound was "about the region of the heart" and "might not prove fatal." Talk was that in the darkness ambushed enemies at several points had fired on the pickets sent out to gird the city.

It was said that John Booth had handed a sealed envelope to John F. Coyle, editor of the *Intelligencer*, with the request: "If you hear of me within twenty-four hours, publish this; if you do not hear of me within that time, destroy it." Although Coyle expressly denied under oath that either he or anyone else connected with the *Intelligencer* received anything of the sort, the yarn continued to turn up—sometimes with ornamental details, such as the burning of the still unopened packet by Coyle at a dinner party.<sup>21</sup>

The fact (as we have seen) was that on the afternoon of April 14th Booth had given to his friend John Matthews "a paper sealed and stamped," to be delivered next morning at the *Intelligencer* office. During the uproar in the theater immediately after

<sup>21</sup> Poore, vol. i, pp. 352-353. New York *Tribune*, June 22, 1878.

the murder, Matthews, who seems to have been thoroughly terrified by what had happened, went straight to his room in the Petersen house and locked the door. He expected that Ford's would be burned. When he removed his coat, the letter Booth had handed him dropped to the floor. He opened and read it. It covered three pages of notepaper, and Matthews said (more than two years afterward) that the last paragraph went about like this:

For a long time I have devoted my energies, my time and money to the accomplishment of a certain end. I have been disappointed. The moment has now arrived when I must change my plans. Many will blame me for what I am about to do; but posterity, I am sure, will justify me.

Men who love their country better than gold or life: J. W. Booth, Paine, Herold, Atzerodt.<sup>22</sup>

Matthews promptly burned the letter. He felt very much as did another friend of Booth's, Col. William E. Sinn, who was managing the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia. ". . . I tried," wrote Sinn, "to persuade myself that I did not know Booth. When questioned in regard to the subject my memory was a blank." Matthews had been cognizant of the abduction plot and naturally felt uneasy. There can be no doubt that the shock of the murder deeply affected him. In later years he would sometimes hint that he had come within an ace of being hanged on a lamppost. From 1891 he was investigating agent or almoner of the Actors' Fund in New York City. His close friend James Young, Shakespearean actor and lecturer on the drama, stated to the present writer:

I never spoke to him about his experiences during the time of the Lincoln murder. Any reference to it made him wildly excited so that he earned the reputation of being erratic—which he was not. Unfeeling people would purposely make mention of the fact that he was mixed up in the conspiracy, to see the effect it would have. Matthews would rush madly from the room.

In one instance we have an opportunity to watch a fiction in process of growth. Between the second and third acts Lewis Carland, the theater's costumer, and James Gifford, stage carpenter, had gone out with Conductor Withers and John Dyott (the Abel

<sup>22</sup> Matthews' letter to the *Intelligencer*, July 18, 1867. Cf. the version he gave before the Committee on the Judiciary (Fortieth Congress, 1st session, House Report 7; p. 783).

Murcott of the play) for a drink in Taltavull's place. Gifford and Carland then remained for a while in front of the theater, where they were joined by Courtland Hess, the actor whose part the call boy Ferguson was taking. Hess was to be one of the vocalists when "Honor to Our Soldiers" was given at the close of the performance. Wondering how soon he must get into evening clothes and appear before the President, he asked in a rather loud tone what time it was and Carland stepped into the lobby, looked at the clock, brought word that it was ten minutes past ten. "Ten minutes past ten," said Hess—"I'll be wanted in a few minutes."<sup>23</sup>

A Sergeant Dye, from Camp Barry, was loitering on the sidewalk. We can only surmise that the Sergeant may also have been patronizing Taltavull's—not wisely but too well; for after the murder he told an absurd yarn of how Booth and two fellow-conspirators had met in front of the theater and behaved most conspicuously and suspiciously, and how one of the accomplices had, watchman fashion, thrice called the time from the lobby. For a half-hour the Sergeant observed these dubious proceedings but did nothing, though inwardly conjecturing that they boded no good to the President.<sup>24</sup>

Young George Alfred Townsend ("Gath"), special correspondent of New York's *World*, when he chanced upon this fantasy of Dye's, transmuted it into something rich and strange:

Suddenly there was a murmur near the audience door, as of a man speaking above his bound. He said:—

"Nine o'clock and forty-five minutes!"

These words were reiterated from mouth to mouth until they passed the theatre door, and were heard upon the sidewalk.

Directly a voice cried, in the same slightly raised monotone—

"Nine o'clock and fifty minutes!" This also passed from man to man, until it touched the street like a shudder.

"Nine o'clock and fifty-five minutes!" said the same relentless voice, after the next interval, each of which narrowed to a lesser span the life of the good President.

Ten o'clock here sounded, and conspiring echo said in reverberation—

"Ten o'clock!"

<sup>23</sup> Surratt Trial, vol. i, pp. 557-566.

<sup>24</sup> New York *Tribune*, Apr. 21, 1865. Testimony at the Conspiracy Trial.

So, like a creeping thing, from lip to lip went—

“Ten o’clock and five minutes!”

An interval.

“Ten o’clock and ten minutes!”

At this instant Wilkes Booth appeared in the door of the theatre, and the men who had repeated the time so faithfully and so ominously, scattered at his coming as at some warning phantom.

All of which is an extract not from a “penny dreadful” or a dime novel but from a journalist’s letter to his paper. It is fustian and nonsense—but not more so than other things written about Lincoln’s murder.

William M. Stewart, senator from Nevada, was responsible for a story that has been retailed by various writers, either with complete indorsement or with something like tacit approval. According to Stewart, Andrew Johnson, wakened in the Kirkwood House at eight o’clock on the dire morning of April 15th, was in a besotted condition, hardly able to walk and with mud caked in his hair. Barber, doctor, tailor were summoned for the emergency, that Johnson might be rendered halfway fit for public view. Of this figment and its several minutiae we may well say, with George F. Milton, “A more outrageous lie has seldom been told in history.”

When Johnson was sworn in at eleven o’clock that morning in his Kirkwood lodgings, all the members of the Cabinet except Seward were present and the senators who had not yet left the capital were brought in as witnesses. None found anything to criticize in the occasion except that a few detected traces of egotism in Johnson’s five-minute address and regretted the absence of any eulogy of Lincoln. The opening sentence was: “I must be permitted to say that I have been almost overwhelmed by the announcement of the sad event which has so recently occurred”; and Johnson was scarcely to be blamed if he thought extempore panegyric unsuitable.

He had been roused from sleep on Friday night by Ex-Gov. L. J. Farwell of Wisconsin, who had rushed from the theater to the Kirkwood and told him the news. The temporary guard stationed by the hotel clerks was soon relieved by the provost guard



of Maj. James O'Beirne, and personal friends arrived to inquire after Johnson's safety. "Distrust and horror," wrote Farwell, "filled every mind." Johnson decided to go to the Petersen house, although his friends thought he ought not to leave the hotel "when there was so much excitement in the city, and when the extent of the conspiracy was unknown." Major O'Beirne wished to send a detachment of troops with him but Johnson declined the offer; and, accompanied by only the Major and Farwell, he made his way to Petersen's and joined the "sad circle" in the overcrowded little back room. In the account obtained by Senator Doolittle for the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Farwell does not say that Johnson remained until the end.<sup>25</sup>

A Washington dispatch printed in the first edition (one-thirty p.m.) of the New York *Commercial Advertiser* for Saturday afternoon, April 15th, referred thus to the scene at 453 Tenth Street:

Mr. Sumner is seated at the head of the bed. Secretary Stanton, Welles, Dennison, Usher and McCulloh [*sic*], and Mr. Speed are in the room. A large number of surgeons, generals, and personal family friends of Mr. Lincoln fill the house. All are in tears. Andy Johnson is here. He was in bed in his room at the Kirkwood when the assassination was committed. He was immediately apprised of the event, and got up. The precaution was taken of providing a guard of soldiers for him and these were at his door before the news was well through the avenue.

Some contemporary pictures show Johnson in the group at the bedside, others do not. That is of no significance, especially as the group changed many times during the night and no two of the pictures fully correspond.

It was believed by many that scene shifter Edman Spangler cut the rough mortise that was found in the wall behind the vestibule door, supplied the wooden bar, and bored the quarter-inch hole in the door of box 7. There is no evidence that he did any of these things. Spangler's customary daytime work was limited to the stage or its close neighborhood and he was not seen in the upper part of the house unless specifically directed to go there—

<sup>25</sup> Doolittle Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

as he was, for example, on the afternoon of the 14th, when he and Jake Ritterspaugh, another scene shifter, removed the partition between boxes 7 and 8 and forthwith went downstairs. The mortise was cut roughly into the plaster with a penknife; the bar was a makeshift, originally intended for some other purpose. A carpenter like Spangler would not have made the one nor used the other. It was testified that the hole in the box door appeared to have been bored with a gimlet, then reamed with a penknife. An iron-handled gimlet, capable of boring a hole three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter, was discovered in Booth's trunk at the National after Booth had disappeared.

Three or four times during that season Booth had engaged box 7, and he commonly had access to all parts of the theater. The vestibule door had no fastening whatever and he could have entered the vestibule unobserved when he wished. It was because this door had no fastening on the inside that he had the bar ready to thrust like a strut between the door and the wall, with which it made an acute angle. One end of the bar would rest in the crude, shallow mortise. The idea was of course to keep anyone from following on Booth's heels.

Several circumstances show that Spangler could have had no knowledge of Booth's design. When Booth rode into the alley between five and six on Friday afternoon and sent for Spangler, the busy stagehand came reluctantly and, having led the horse into the stable, started to remove saddle and bridle, evidently supposing that Booth was putting up the animal for the night. Later, when Booth, during the course of the play, led the horse up to the rear door, Spangler took the rein unwillingly and quickly turned it over to "Peanuts."

John F. Sleichmann, assistant property man, stated that Spangler, when Booth came in the rear door, was "standing by one of the wings"; that Booth said, "Ned, you'll help me all you can, won't you?" and that Spangler answered, "Oh, yes." It appears, however, that Sleichmann was nowhere near the rear door at the time and that Spangler did not meet Booth on the *inside* of the door but went *outside*, where Booth was waiting. Spangler long afterward explained that this interchange did occur in the hearing of Sleichmann and others *but on a previous occasion and in ref-*

*erence to the sale of Booth's driving horse and buggy.*<sup>26</sup> Much was made of a rope found in Spangler's carpetbag at a house where he took his meals. The rope was plainly an old one that had served its day in the theater and been treasured by Spangler for future use as a crabline. If it was for service that night—and what could that service imaginably have been?—why was it not kept at hand in the theater or in Booth's stable?

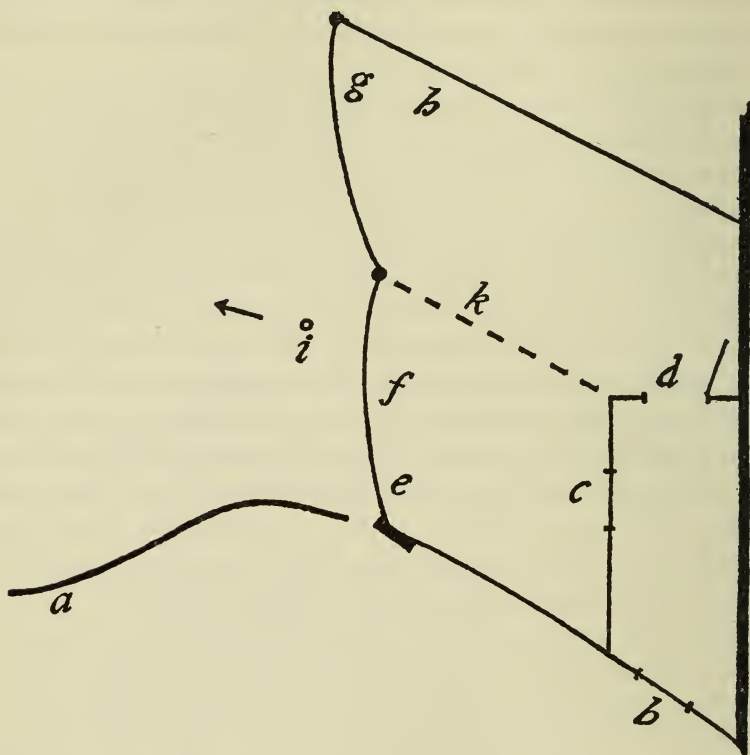
Spangler did not continue to hold Booth's horse—without delay he went back to his place on the stage. He did not open the door for Booth—Booth himself opened the door and slammed it as he passed out. At the moment of the fatal shot, Spangler was just back of the doorway in the scenery—a point at some distance from the passage and door through which Booth went. Spangler made no attempt to get away. He remained “about the Theatre,” wrote John T. Ford, “bitterly lamenting he did not know Booth's intent or his crime until after his escape as he would have struck and captured him.” Taken to Carroll prison on Monday the 17th, Spangler was brought on the 20th to the Superintendent's office and there confronted with the romancing Sergeant Dye, “who merely nodded his head and left the room.” Thus was the scene shifter identified as one of the two villains with whom Dye alleged Booth had been conferring on the sidewalk in front of Ford's! <sup>27</sup> As a matter of fact there was evidence enough, both positive and negative, to show that Spangler could not have been there. We know that Jake Ritterspaugh, who bore false witness against Spangler, had been heard to say he would like to get some of the reward money; and possibly the same kind of bee was humming in Dye's bonnet.

Booth's drawn bowie knife, it was whispered, had been for Grant—but Booth must have been fully aware that Grant was not present. The knife, a silent weapon, was primarily for anybody that might try to intercept Booth in the vestibule; secondarily for anybody that might get in his way or attempt to grapple with him (as Major Rathbone did) after the single-shot Deringer had been fired. A cartridge has been exhibited as “similar to the one which Booth used in shooting Lincoln.” Booth's Deringer did not fire

<sup>26</sup> Statement in “The Life of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd,” p. 324.

<sup>27</sup> John T. Ford MSS.

a cartridge—it was a muzzle-loader, firing a ball by means of a brass percussion cap. After the weapon was picked up in the box where Booth had dropped it, an extra cap was found in a cavity in the butt. Just what Booth would have done if the pistol had



THE "STATE BOX" AT THE TIME OF THE MURDER

*a.* Apron of stage—*b.* Door into vestibule from dress circle—*c.* Door of nearer box (this remained closed)—*d.* Door of farther box (this remained open)—*e.* Lincoln—*f.* Mrs. Lincoln—*g.* Miss Harris—*h.* Major Rathbone—*i.* Spot where Booth landed on stage, near first-tier boxes—*k.* Line of removed partition.

missed fire, as Lawrence's two pistols did when he leveled them at Andrew Jackson, we have no way of knowing. As it was, he dropped the pistol and shifted the knife from his left hand to his right. A professor was reported as having said that more than two hundred pistols "with which Lincoln was killed" are in existence in various collections and that some of them were not made until



long after 1865. The genuine article never left the keeping of the War Department. As for the hole in the door, which some maintained was to *shoot* through—it was to *look* through, so that Booth might know just where and how Lincoln was sitting.

Rathbone seized Booth, but he broke away and lunged at Rathbone with the knife. Parrying the stroke, Rathbone was wounded in the left arm, but he rushed forward in a vain endeavor again to seize Booth, who was just going over the balustrade. In his dash along the passage from the stage to the rear door, Booth collided with William Withers, the conductor, who stood in the third entrance. He made a couple of stabs at Withers and plunged out into the darkness. It may be that, coming from the footlighted stage into the dim alley, he did not rightly know who was holding the horse. Possibly he thought it was Spangler. As he mounted, he felled "Peanuts" with a blow from the butt end of the knife. Stewart, close behind, reached the alley in time to see the horse curvetting from side to side. Then, crouched over the pommel of the saddle, Booth spurred the animal forward and up the slight incline of the alley entrance into F Street, where he turned, Stewart said, to the right (toward the Patent Office).

Of minor consequence in itself, but illustrative of the jumbled and inconsistent testimony as to what happened at Ford's, is the dispute regarding Laura Keene. Townsend said that Miss Keene "ascended the stairs in the rear of Mr. Lincoln's box"—but there were no stairs in the rear of the "state box." John T. Ford expressly stated that the only approach was by the vestibule door through which Booth went; Harry Ford, that there was no door in the back wall.<sup>28</sup> According to the New York *Herald*, Miss Keene "made her way, which was rather circuitous, through the dress circle to the President's box." William J. Ferguson wrote that he personally assisted Miss Keene over the footlights to the floor of the orchestra. "We went rapidly to the lobby stairs," he continued, "and thence up to the box." . . .<sup>29</sup>

Mrs. J. B. Wright (Annie F. Wright), widow of the stage manager at Ford's, denied that Miss Keene was in the box at all, saying:

<sup>28</sup> Surratt Trial ("The Reporter," vol. iv, pp. 13, 18).

<sup>29</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*, Feb. 12, 1929.

There was no way that she could have gained access to the box directly from the stage. She would have had to go to the front of the theater, mount the main staircase to the balcony [dress circle], then work her way through a surging crowd along the back of the balcony to the box. It was simply impossible.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, Miss Jennie Gourlay (Mrs. Struthers) asserted that Miss Keene *was* in the box. Three Gourlays were in that night's cast: Thomas C. (Sir Edward Trenchard), and daughters Margaret and Jennie (respectively, Skillet and Mary Meredith). Jennie stated that T. C. Gourlay "took Laura Keene up to the box by a way known to the regular [Ford's] company"—that he "escorted Miss Keene through a side entrance"—that he "unlocked a door of a private passage."<sup>31</sup> As we have noted, the stage entrance proper was on the "lower" (south) side of the theater, and was reached from Tenth Street by passing through a corridor in the adjoining building (where Taltavull's place was), then along the theater wall and up a few steps from the ground level to the level of the stage. This three-storied adjoining building extended back less than half the depth of the theater, and at the rear an outer stair gave convenient access to the third floor, where Harry and James Ford had their rooms.

If Jennie Gourlay's statement is correct, it seems possible that Miss Keene went up this stair and thus entered the "lounging room" that opened from the adjoining building's second floor directly into the south end of the dress circle. Thence she could have got readily to the box.<sup>32</sup> Eyewitness Thomas H. Sherman, who had climbed onto the stage, speaks of Miss Keene as "the only cool person there." She said, by Sherman's account, "For God's sake, gentlemen, be quiet; keep cool." She helped a man up over the side of the box and sent for a pitcher of water. Sherman does not, however, mention her presence in the box. But eyewitnesses Helen Truman, E. A. Emerson, and Dr. Charles A. Leale (who, after the vestibule door was opened, entered the box from the dress circle to offer such medical aid as might be possible) agree that Miss Keene was there.

<sup>30</sup> *Boston Globe*, Apr. 11, 1915.

<sup>31</sup> A. C. Clark, "Abraham Lincoln in the National Capital"; pp. 107-108. *Minneapolis Journal*, Apr. 27, 1914.

<sup>32</sup> *Washington Star*, May 16, 1865. *New York Clipper*, May 20. Testimony of Madox and Simms at the Conspiracy Trial.

On the night of the 14th, Seaton Munroe, a lawyer having an office on Fifth Street opposite the City Hall, was walking along Pennsylvania Avenue with a friend when suddenly a man ran down Tenth Street, calling out, "My God! The President is killed at Ford's Theatre!" Munroe started for the theater, and there, he says, encountered Laura Keene. ". . . Her hair and dress were in disorder, and not only was her gown soaked with Lincoln's blood, but her hands, even her cheeks where her fingers had strayed, were bedaubed with the sorry stains!" The weight of evidence seems to be that Lincoln bled very little if at all while in the theater because of the clot that gathered around the orifice of the wound. Dr. Charles Taft said that at the Petersen house the wound had to be kept "free from coagula." Blood was on the yellow satin costume worn by the brunette Miss Keene, but it was Major Rathbone's. "I am sorry to say," commented W. J. Ferguson, "that after this great tragedy, Miss Keene, in her travels throughout the country, would exhibit this dress and claim that it was stained with the blood of the President." This was probably done in good faith and is hardly deserving of Ferguson's strictures.

A Capt. Silas Owen, described as commanding officer of the U.S.S. *Primrose*, an eyewitness at Ford's that night, says that the dark man "clambered down the side of the box" and that Mrs. Lincoln, leaning over the box's edge, called out to the audience, "They have shot pa!" ("I remember the homely phrase so well," the Captain avers, with apparent seriousness.) As if this were not enough, the reminiscent sea-dog relates that "Mrs." Keene was standing irrelevantly between boxes and lowered curtain, that the dark man "dragged himself up to her," and that she, extending her hands toward him, asked, "What have you done, John?" The insidious fellow thereupon thrust at her with his dagger and cried, "*Sic semper tyrannis!*"<sup>33</sup>

Other eyewitnesses are equally imaginative, if less amusing. One W. H. Roberts of Findlay, Ohio, a cavalryman in the war, says the curtain was not rung up on "Our American Cousin" until after Lincoln was seated.<sup>34</sup> A Jennie Ross (Mrs. W. E. W. Ross) of Philadelphia is said to have been in the cast that night as Jennie

<sup>33</sup> Boston *Sunday Journal*, Sept. 22, 1895.

<sup>34</sup> New York *Times*, Feb. 13, 1927.

Anderson (though no such name is on the playbill) and frequently to have recalled how Miss Keene *climbed into* the box and took the President's head in her lap.<sup>35</sup> It seems to be true that Miss Keene, after reaching the box, did support Lincoln's head; but that honor has likewise been claimed by a Mrs. Willard, who exhibited apparel with "large dark splotches" on it and stated that she occupied the box *next to* the President!<sup>36</sup>

One Myron Parker of Washington wrote to the *Post* of that city that he was in the audience at Ford's; that he neither saw any "undue commotion" nor heard any uproar. "Some emotional person did call out that the theater was on fire," he admitted (we do not learn of this elsewhere), "but this created no excitement, as some gentleman on the stage assured the audience that there was no cause for alarm. The audience then moved out of the theatre in the usual orderly manner."<sup>37</sup>

Athanasius against the world: others thought it an extraordinary occasion, but not the phlegmatic Mr. Parker. "Excited crowds during the war were nothing new to me," wrote Seaton Munroe, "but I had never witnessed such a scene as was now presented. The seats, aisles, galleries, and stage were filled with shouting, frenzied men and women, many running aimlessly over one another; a chaos of disorder beyond control had any visible authority attempted to exercise it."<sup>38</sup> But Mr. Parker was quietly oblivious to it all.

A Ford's playbill bearing the words

#### THIS EVENING

The Performance will be honored by the presence of  
PRESIDENT LINCOLN

still is quite often accepted as genuine, although dealers and collectors have long known it to be a forgery, and a poor one at that. Originals carry at the bottom the imprint of Polkinhorn (D Street, near Seventh). Some lack the "Prices of Admission," which

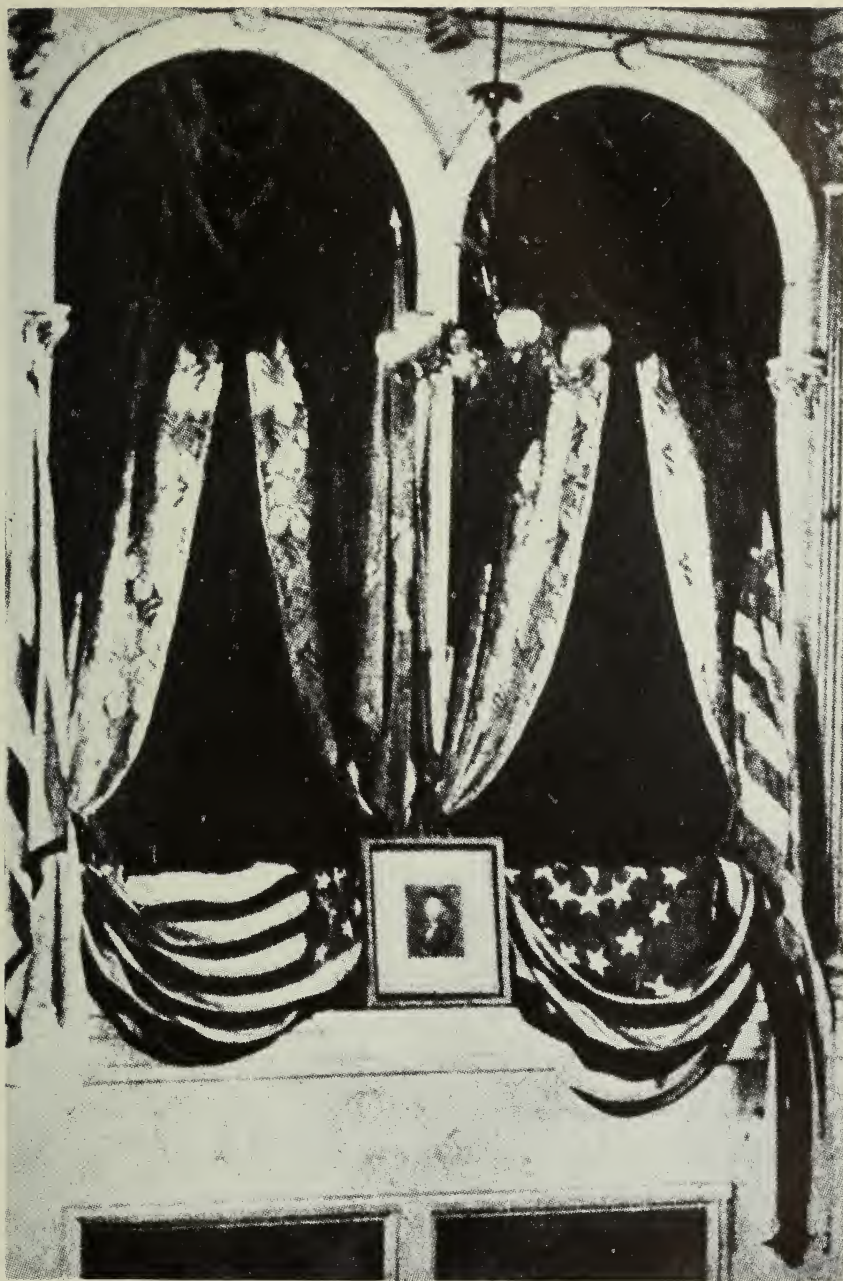
<sup>35</sup> New York *Times*, Dec. 29, 1924.

<sup>36</sup> New York *Post*, Apr. 6, 1936.

<sup>37</sup> *Post*, Feb. 19, 1917. Clark, "Abraham Lincoln in the National Capital"; pp. 217-218.

<sup>38</sup> *North American Review*, Apr. 1896.





*War Department photograph*

"STATE BOX" AT FORD'S, FROM THE STAGE  
(Treasury Guard colors in center, above portrait)



were dropped to make room for a quotation from the song "Honor to Our Soldiers." Typographical differences between genuine bills and the forgery are many and obvious.

It was once proclaimed that a gentleman in Brooklyn, New York, was owner of a playbill stained with Lincoln's blood. He was said to have received it by gift from an uncle, a lawyer in Washington, to whom it had been presented by John T. Ford, "first man to reach the box after the fatal shot had been fired." Ford had picked it up near the rocking chair; and before he died, in November 1879, had signed an affidavit to that effect. Terming this a "rare bit of humor," Ford—who still was active as a manager, and who lived until March 14th, 1894—explained that at the time of the murder he was in Richmond (whither he had gone on a personal errand). He had, he said, identified a playbill for "a gentleman living in the North," but could state "most emphatically" that it had no bloodstains on it.

Lincoln's blood seemed to hold peculiar interest for the gory-minded. A clerical memorandum, with a few words added by the President on April 14th and signed "A. L.," was retrieved from the archives of the Treasury Department. A newspaper reporter happened to see it and gave out that Lincoln's blood had spotted it. There is no evidence that Lincoln had the memorandum on his person when he was shot; and the alleged bloodstains were nothing but what is termed "foxiness"—the result of age and dampness.

A glib radio talker is on record as having informed the world that the Jewelers' Association of America, in convention at Washington at some time during 1865, passed a resolution to this effect:

RESOLVED, that from and after this date all signs of dummy watches or clocks, indicating the jeweler's business, shall show on their face the hands pointing to that time, 22½ minutes after eight—

the said time being that at which Lincoln had entered the theater. The said time is impossible, inasmuch as Major Rathbone stated in his affidavit that it was not until "about twenty minutes after eight o'clock" that Miss Harris and he left their residence at Fourteenth and H Streets to join the President and Mrs. Lincoln in the carriage.

This is only an old fiction in a new guise. There used to be a

flamboyant piece that told why the big watches on posts, long the watch repairer's common sign, had their painted hands at eight-eighteen. At precisely that moment, it appeared, Booth had shot Lincoln—"so always that dumb horologe reads eight-eighteen!" In other words, Lincoln was shot before he had entered the theater. Many dumb horologes have been fixed unchangingly at approximately twenty minutes after eight; and the reason was that this spread of the hands made a balanced arrangement and gave room for advertising.

But at just what time did John Booth fire the shot? Dr. Robert K. Stone, the Lincolns' family physician, summoned by Mrs. Lincoln to the Petersen house, said it was "about a quarter past 10" when he reached the President. This is manifestly incorrect. Eyewitness J. P. Ferguson said it was somewhere near ten when he saw Booth leaning against the wall of the dress circle near the vestibule door. Eyewitnesses J. B. Stewart and Dr. Charles Taft practically coincide: Taft says the shot was at half-past ten, and Stewart testified that at about half-past ten the sharp report of a pistol—"evidently a charged pistol"—startled him.

Nicolay and Hay give ". . . a few minutes past ten," David H. Bates places it at ten-twenty. None of the three was present. Nicolay had left Washington for a trip to Cuba; Hay was at the Executive Mansion; Bates was on night duty at the telegraph office of the War Department. John E. Buckingham, doorkeeper at Ford's, who had opportunity to consult the lobby clock from time to time, told an interviewer for the *Washington Star*: "I should say it was about twenty minutes after ten o'clock, and I was putting away my checks and tickets and getting ready to close up when the show was over, when I heard the noise of a pistol shot."<sup>39</sup> If we put the fateful moment in the interval from "about" ten-twenty to "about" ten-thirty, we shall not be far wrong; but we have no warrant for being more precise.

The ball entered the skull about midway between the left ear and the median line of the back of the head—but doctors disagreed as to where it lodged. In the anterior part of the left side of the brain—so testified Dr. R. K. Stone; and his statement was followed by Nicolay and Hay. Within a half-inch of the right eye—so testi-

<sup>39</sup> Apr. 14, 1903.



fied Surgeon-General J. K. Barnes, whose assistant, Doctor Woodward, performed the autopsy in Barnes' presence. Woodward, it was stated, found the ball behind the orbit of the right eye. Reporting the autopsy, the *Intelligencer* said:<sup>40</sup> "The course of the ball was obliquely forward toward the right eye, crossing the brain in an oblique manner, and lodging a few inches behind that eye."

How far was it from box to stage? Figures range from fourteen feet (Laughlin) to "about seven" (D. H. Bates). "Some ten feet," said Miss Chapman, eyewitness; eyewitness Doctor Taft said twelve feet. Twelve feet was also the reckoning of W. J. Ferguson, who was more or less familiar with the theater. The lower boxes opened not far above the level of the stage. One correspondent described them as "scarcely more than loopholes" and observed:

The apertures which appear above the stage are about three feet square. Consequently the boxes immediately above them are elevated but a short distance above the stage, a distance which any one could easily leap, even were his nerves not freshly braced from the commission of a murder.<sup>41</sup>

It was testified by Harry Ford that when working in the box on Friday afternoon he called for a hammer and nails; that Spangler tossed up two or three nails "and handed me the hammer up from the stage." For men of average height, with fairly long arms, nine feet would be about the limit at which this could be done. After the shooting, a pitcher of water was handed up from the stage.

In his affidavit, Major Rathbone gave the height of the box above the stage, *including the balustrade*, as "about ten or twelve feet." Probably eleven feet from the cushion of the balustrade to the stage would be a fair guess. "It was a high leap," say Nicolay and Hay. Not for Booth—at least John T. Ford did not think so; Ford had seen Booth introduce leaps equally high—"extraordinary and outrageous" leaps—into dramatic performances ("Macbeth," for example) and make them "with apparent ease." It had been rumored in the press that "the leap of Booth from the box to the stage had been rehearsed,"<sup>42</sup> but Ford dismissed the idea. "I

<sup>40</sup> Apr. 17, 1865.

<sup>41</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Apr. 17, 1865; p. 1 (special Washington dispatch of the 16th).

<sup>42</sup> See the *Washington Weekly Chronicle*, May 13, 1865; p. 5.

should not think a rehearsal of it was needed," he said. "He [Booth] was a very bold, fearless man. . . . He excelled in all manly sports."

How did Booth "leap"? The common idea—fostered, no doubt, by the drawing Albert Berghaus made for *Frank Leslie's*—has been that, in W. J. Ferguson's words, he "mounted the box railing" (balustrade) and jumped. This is improbable. Major Rathbone stated that Booth leaped *over* the balustrade, not *from* it and that he "went over upon the stage." He placed both hands on the balustrade and "swung over," W. H. Taylor said. J. P. Ferguson testified that Booth put his left hand on the balustrade and seemed to be striking behind him with a knife held in his right. "I could see the knife gleam," Ferguson said, "and the next moment he was over the box. As he went over, his hand was raised, the handle of the knife up, the blade down." Rathbone, Taylor, and J. P. Ferguson are thus agreed that Booth *vaulted* the low balustrade. Rathbone, again trying to seize him, grasped at his clothing. There was neither time nor opportunity for a spectacular descent. Booth placed his hands on the cushion of the balustrade; then partly turned, drew back his right hand to strike at Rathbone with the knife, and, supported by his left arm, swung his legs over the balustrade and dropped.

He seemed not to spring but to tumble onto the stage. Mrs. J. B. Wright, who sat in the fourth row of the orchestra said: "He landed in a kneeling posture, his left knee resting on the stage." Many in the audience quite naturally wondered where he had come from and what he was supposed to be doing. Major Rathbone believed that the elapsed time between shot and vault did not exceed thirty seconds. It probably was much less. No doubt most of those that heard the report of the pistol imagined it to be, as Doctor Taft wrote, "an introductory effect preceding some new situation in the play." And now this dark man came hurtling into the gleam of the footlights, his back slightly toward the audience, and appeared to crumple on the floor. It was a strange apparition to be launched into the midst of Asa Trenchard's homespun soliloquy.

Booth had swung his legs to his right, toward the central pillar.

Across the front of the pillar and projecting well above the balustrade hung a framed engraving of George Washington—an added touch to the decorative scheme. Above this, from a staff fixed to the pillar, depended the blue-and-white regimental colors of the Treasury Guard. Back of these was a draped lace curtain. It was a collection of obstacles that proved John Booth's undoing. He struck the picture frame, breaking a piece from the molding and knocking the picture around so that it faced inward, and—possibly in trying to avoid the picture—he put his right foot into the Treasury Guard's colors.

"The blue, or regimental color, was torn by the spur of the assassin catching in it as he leaped from the box to the stage," said an editorial note in Washington's *National Republican*.<sup>43</sup> At the time of the inspection of Ford's by the Military Commission, the *Washington Star* stated:

The stage is almost precisely in the condition it was at the moment of the assassination. The scene (third act "American Cousin") is set as at that moment. . . . The box used by Mr. Lincoln bears the same picture of Washington at its front, and a couple of flags are draped over the box [that is, the balustrade] as then, but not the Treasury Guards' flag, which caught Booth's spur on that occasion.<sup>44</sup>

*Frank Leslie's* sent Berghaus, a staff artist, to Washington to make sketches in connection with the murder. It published an engraving made from one of his sketches, with the title: "Flag in front of the President's box at Ford's Theatre, Washington, torn by the assassin as he leaped down to the stage."<sup>45</sup> The engraving shows the Treasury Guard's colors with a rent in the lower edge and the fringe torn and hanging.

On May 31st Harry Ford testified as follows:

Q. Do you know whether Booth's spur caught in one of the flags as he leaped from the box?

A. I heard that it caught in the blue flag in the centre; I do not know it. [He was in the box-office when Booth vaulted to the stage.]

Q. Who put that flag there?

A. I did; it was the one obtained from the Treasury building.

<sup>43</sup> Apr. 20, 1865; p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Star* of May 16; quoted in *New York Clipper* of May 20.

<sup>45</sup> May 20; p. 141.

He added:

I found two flags which I looped up and placed in position; then another flag came down from the Treasury Department and I altered them, putting the new flag in the centre. [The first two, each on a staff, were placed at either side of the box.]<sup>46</sup>

James R. Ford arranged for the loan of the Guard's colors, and they were brought by an employee of the Treasury who assisted Harry Ford in draping them.

James P. Ferguson's testimony, as correctly reported, was this:

Q. Did Booth's spur catch in the flag?

A. His spur caught in the flag that was stretched around [the balustrade of] the box. There was also a flag decorating this post. His spur caught in the blue part of it. I thought it was a State flag at first, by the looks of it. . . . As he went over, his spur caught in the moulding that ran round the edge of the box, and also in this flag, and tore a piece of the flag. . . .<sup>47</sup>

Maj. Emory S. Turner of the Treasury Guard was deputed to remove and take charge of the regimental colors. They were borne in procession when Lincoln's body was taken from the Executive Mansion to the Capitol on April 19th. (The military escort was limited to the regular Army and the Marine Corps, so that the Treasury Guard did not march as such, but clerks and other employees of the Treasury Department joined in the civic procession.) When the Treasury Guard was disbanded, Major Turner retained the colors, which eventually came into the possession of the Lincoln Museum. Turner stated that it was in this flag Booth caught his spur.

In spite of this and other evidence, a United States flag hanging in a case in the Treasury Building, and showing no rent, was long exhibited as the flag in question. When it fell into acute disrepair, congressmen interested themselves in preserving it as such. It may have been at one time the national ensign carried by the Treasury Guard—each regiment having, of course, both national ensign and regimental colors; although it appears to have been promoted from the machinist's room in the building to its later place of unwarranted distinction. Rhetorical allusions to "Old

<sup>46</sup> *Weekly Chronicle*, June 10; p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Poore, vol. i, pp. 192-193.



Glory" as the Nemesis of Booth have undoubtedly been misplaced. Booth's spur may possibly, as J. P. Ferguson believed, have caught in the large flag spread like bunting along the balustrade, or even in the lace curtain, but it was portrait and Treasury Guard colors that joined to trip him.

What, if anything, did Booth shout, and when did he shout it? According to W. J. Ferguson, who has been much quoted by various writers, he shouted nothing at all. According to next day's *Intelligencer* he shouted thrice—"Sic semper tyrannis!" ("This be ever the fate of tyrants," state motto of John's beloved Virginia) at the edge of the box; "Revenge!" as he crossed the stage; and "I have done it!" as he disappeared. Between these extremes is considerable variety. Immediately after the shot, he uttered (in the box), said Rathbone, "some word which deponent thinks was 'Freedom.' " Eleven witnesses (Truman, Hawk, Taylor, Emerson, Mrs. Wright, Knox, McGowan, J. P. Ferguson, Doctor Todd, Ex-Governor Farwell, even the impervious Mr. Parker) heard him exclaim, "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" But when? Two say it was before he vaulted; three, while he was in the air; six, as he rose to his feet on the stage.

Three of these also heard him cry out something about the South—"Revenge for the South!" as he vaulted; "The South shall be free!" or "The South is avenged!" from the stage. "Brandishing a dagger, he shrieks out, 'The South is avenged,' and rushes through the scenery"—so wrote Miss Chapman, who heard nothing else. He "landed on the stage, brandishing his knife, exclaiming what sounded to me like 'Revenge' or 'Avenged' "—thus T. H. Sherman, who also heard nothing more. In all this evidence there is variance sufficient to make us realize the swift audacity of that crowded moment, unison sufficient to convince us that "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" was indeed no myth. John Booth, as he himself later wrote, did shout these words that he must often have read on the seal of Virginia blazoned upon the pages of the *Richmond Daily Whig*. But it is not likely that he shouted them, as he imagined, before he fired.

It has been represented that on the fatal April 14th Lincoln had requested extraordinary protection at the theater and his re-

quest nefariously had been denied. If the reference is to Stanton's attitude about releasing Major Eckert to go with the Lincolns, it must be said that, besides the Stantons, seven other persons, including Robert Lincoln, are known to have been invited; and all began with one accord to make excuse. Robert had no better reason than that he wished to "turn in early"—which, by the way, he did not do; for when a crowd burst into the Executive Mansion with the dreadful news of murder, he and Major Hay "sat gossiping in an upper room."<sup>48</sup> Some of the others pleaded that they were too fagged or were leaving town. Eckert, had he gone, would have been a guest as would the others—not a sentry or a detective. Even Eckert's friend and associate David Bates said it was idle to conjecture whether Eckert's presence in the box would have made any difference. Stanton was firm in discouraging Lincoln's theater-going, and Eckert respected Stanton's wishes.

Lincoln asked for no further protection on that April night than that of Charles Forbes, the footman-attendant, and of a special guard such as had been provided since November 1864 by a detail from the Metropolitan Police. John Parker, to whom the duty fell, had recently been chosen by Superintendent Richards to fill a vacancy in that detail. It was usual for the President to confirm such appointments, but Lincoln was in City Point and it appears that Mrs. Lincoln was called upon to act for him in this matter of household routine. The draft had previously interfered with arrangements in the Executive Mansion, as we learn from Hay's plaint that "William Johnson (cullud) was taken while polishing the Executive boots and rasping the Imperial Abolition whisker. Henry Stoddard is a conscript bold."<sup>49</sup> It was therefore found desirable to have this special detail exempted from the draft and certificates of appointment were furnished to the provost marshal of the District, who had authority in such matters. Exemption was thus obtained in usual course for Parker, who had previously enlisted at the time of the President's call for troops from the District.

Prior to November 1864, Forbes had been Lincoln's only regular escort. Therefore it might well have been supposed that on the

<sup>48</sup> W. R. Thayer, "The Life of John Hay," vol. i, p. 219.

<sup>49</sup> From a letter to the absent Nicolay (Aug. 7, 1863).

night of April 14th, 1865, Lincoln was better protected in the theater than he had been at any time up to November 1864—that is, during by far the greater part of the war. William H. Crook was ready to accompany the President that night, but the President would not hear of it and was quite content with the unseasoned John Parker, of whom he could have known nothing and who unfortunately was not at all of suitable caliber.

Parker duly watched over the Lincolns and their guests from carriage to box. His orders (according to Crook) were then to stand, fully armed, in the little vestibule and keep any “unauthorized person” from going further. The theater had been accustomed to place a chair there for the special guard’s convenience, and Parker evidently occupied it for a while. We know that during an intermission—Coachman Burke thought it was after the first act—both Parker and Forbes left their posts, went out to get a drink, and were gone for at least ten minutes. Hence we need not be surprised to learn, through Parker’s own acknowledgment to Crook, that, hearing the voices of the players but unable to see the action, Parker finally took an empty seat in the dress circle. (In “Through Five Administrations,” Crook was made to say that it was “at the front,” but in the later “Memories of the White House” this became “the last row.”) Hanscom, editor of the *National Republican*, who came up to the dress circle with a “dispatch” for the President, wrote that at that time there was neither guard, watchman, sentinel, nor usher at the vestibule door and he thought anyone might have passed. He was referring, however, to the *outside* of the door; he did not (as Lieutenant Crawford wrongly supposed) go in and give the document to the President but handed it to Forbes, whose seat was in the fourth row of section A, immediately in front of the door.<sup>50</sup>

It does not appear whether Parker had an understanding with Forbes, nor can we be sure as to precisely where he was when the dark man came edging around the dress circle. The special guard was not on post—that is all we know. It is possible that the dark man was aware of this. From the words of Captain McGowan or of Surgeon Todd of the *Montauk*, both of whom sat near, it is plain that he made no attempt to sneak in unobserved. On the

<sup>50</sup> *Republican*, June 8, 1865; p. 2. Plan of dress circle (McLellan Collection).



contrary, he very deliberately presented a card to Charles Forbes. Todd is quite explicit:

... I turned my head to look at him. He was still walking very slow, and was near the box door, when he stopped, took a card from his pocket, wrote something on it, and gave it to the usher [Forbes], who took it to the box.<sup>51</sup>

Dr. Charles A. Leale, who sat (he says) in the dress circle, about forty feet from the box, even mentions a slight commotion at the vestibule door and asserts:

With many others I looked in that direction, and saw a man endeavoring to persuade the reluctant usher [Forbes] to admit him. At last he succeeded in gaining an entrance, after which the door was closed and the usher resumed his place.<sup>52</sup>

Various canards and gossip quickly found their way into the press. Thus the *Evening Bulletin* of Philadelphia said:<sup>53</sup>

A sentinel was placed in the passage way to the private box occupied by the President. Before the performance commenced, Booth passed this sentry by giving the name of some Governor. These facts are derived from an authentic source.

Even *Harper's Magazine* for June said, in its "Monthly Record of Current Events":

He stood for a few moments near the door of the passage, near which was no one who knew him. He then went to the door. As he was opening it, the sentinel asked him if he knew what box he was entering. He coolly replied that he did; it was the box of the President, who wished to see him. He entered the passage and fastened the door behind him.

In the archives at Washington is a statement by Herold—of no more value than most of what poor Davy had to say—to the effect that Booth showed "a letter" to a "soldier or officer" who barred his way, and the man at once allowed him to pass! Undoubtedly there always were men ready to intrude upon Lincoln, even on such occasions as this; Lincoln and his attendants were used to them; but what made this letter a "wand of magic power"?

<sup>51</sup> Todd letter, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>52</sup> "Lincoln's Last Hours"; p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Apr. 17; p. 3 (from the third ed. of the 15th).



Townsend had his version:

. . . A young man, so precisely resembling the one described as J. Wilkes Booth that he is asserted to be the same, appeared before the open door of the President's box, and prepared to enter.

The servant who attended Mr. Lincoln said politely, "this is the President's box, sir, no one is permitted to enter." "I am a senator," responded the person, "Mr. Lincoln has sent for me." The attendant gave way, and the young man passed into the box.

Simple, is it not? But where did Townsend obtain it? Obviously not from John Booth. From Forbes? Forbes was not so unreserved with any other newspaperman. Besides, Forbes was not in the box—he was sitting in the dress circle, by the vestibule door, where Crawford, McGowan, Hanscom, Todd, and Leale saw him.

On May 1st, 1865, formal notice was served upon Parker that a charge of neglect of duty had been preferred against him by Superintendent Richards to the Board of Metropolitan Police. It was specified that "said Parker was detailed to attend and protect the President Mr Lincoln, that while the President was at Fords Theatre on the night of the 14 of April last, Said Parker allowed a man to enter the Presidents private Box and Shoot the President." Richards and "Chs. Forbs at Presidents House" were named as witnesses.<sup>54</sup>

Parker's trial by the Board was held, according to official statement, on the afternoon of May 3rd at the Board's office, 483 Tenth Street. We do not know what the witnesses testified nor what defense Parker offered. Records of the trial are unfortunately missing, with other records of the period, from the Police Department's broken files, which have suffered through past lack of adequate housing and custody. It is the honest student, as Gamaliel Bradford pointed out,<sup>55</sup> who is hampered by this kind of deficit. "The partisan and the scandal-monger remain wholly indifferent." All we know now is that the trial was *in camera*, after the usual manner of such procedure, and that the complaint was dismissed on June 2nd, 1865. Parker, Crook thought, "looked like a convicted criminal" next day and "was never the same man afterward."

<sup>54</sup> From records of the Metropolitan Police Department.

<sup>55</sup> "Confederate Portraits"; p. 124.

Mrs. Elizabeth Keckley, a Negro modiste who was often in the Executive Mansion and in whom Mary Lincoln seems to have confided, says<sup>56</sup> that Mrs. Lincoln, fancying in her distress that Parker had been involved in a conspiracy, had him brought to her and furiously accused him of having been a party to the President's murder. "I shall always believe," she cried, "that you are guilty!" Nothing, however, is known to justify the suggestion. No matter on what technical grounds he may have been acquitted, Parker (like John M. Lloyd, who also had been a member of the force) was feckless and drunken, and utterly wanted Crook's high sense of responsibility. His general history as an officer was undeniably bad and must have weighed against him when at last in 1868 he was summarily dismissed for sleeping while on duty. But that he was a conspirator or in the pay of conspirators, there is neither evidence nor likelihood.

Not much can be said for the attendant Charles Forbes. He made, not at the time but so late as September 17th, 1892, when he appears to have been living in Washington, an affidavit whose whole effect is to shake confidence in the man's essential trustworthiness. For example, he swears that Mrs. Lincoln, Miss Harris, and Major Rathbone went together from the Executive Mansion to the theater, and that the carriage then was sent back for the President. As a matter of fact, we know that no less than five persons saw the President with Mrs. Lincoln in the carriage as it was driven from the Executive Mansion to call for Miss Harris and her fiancé at Senator Harris' residence (Fifteenth and H Streets).

This incidentally disposes of Forbes' assertion that the last bit of writing Lincoln did was a signature on a photograph at Forbes' request. Furthermore, the statement made by Forbes that he "was in the box when the assassin fired his fatal shot" is not only implicitly contradicted by eyewitnesses but categorically denied by Major Rathbone's affidavit, sworn to on April 17th, 1865, which says the box "was occupied by the President and Mrs. Lincoln, Miss Harris and this deponent, and by no other person." (A popular history of the United States has Tad in the box at Ford's, though he is known to have been at Grover's, viewing "Aladdin.")

<sup>56</sup> "Behind the Scenes"; pp. 193-195.

Parker's dereliction must be conceded. Crook all his days lamented that in the hour of need one of the little group of special officers had failed the President. But we also may ask: Why was Charles Forbes so remiss as to grant entrance to the dark man, whose wild appearance and restive behavior already had caused many eyes to follow him? We need not "hint a shame." Both Parker and Forbes belonged to the President's immediate household, with which Edwin M. Stanton had nothing to do. For Parker's appointment to the special guard the head of the Metropolitan Police was directly responsible.

There was a slight interruption in telegraphic service from Washington during that terrible April night. Inasmuch as emphasis has been laid on this interruption as a suspicious circumstance, it may be well to refer to the examination of T. T. Eckert, before the Committee on the Judiciary, May 30th, 1867. (Eckert, it will be remembered, was chief of the War Department's telegraph staff at the time of the murder.)

Q. Did you have any knowledge of the telegraph lines at or about the time of the assassination of President Lincoln?

A. I did.

Q. Was there any interruption of the lines that night?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What was it?

A. It was my impression at the time [that] they were cut, but we got circuit again very early the next morning. The manager of the Commercial office reported the cause to have been the crossing of wires in main batteries. Throwing a ground wire over the main wires would have caused the same trouble, and taking it off would have put it in ordinary working condition.

Q. Was there an investigation into what was the real cause of the difficulty?

A. No, sir. It did not at the time seem to be sufficiently important, as the interruption only continued about two hours. I was so full of business of almost every character that I could not give it my personal attention. The interruption was only of a portion of the lines between Washington and Baltimore. We worked our City Point line all the time.

Q. Do you know whether the Commercial lines were interrupted at that time?



A. Yes, sir. It was only the Commercial lines that were interrupted; it was in the Commercial office and not in the War Department office. . . .<sup>57</sup>

The notion that "government experts," under the direction of Stanton or Major Eckert or both of them, tampered with commercial telegraph lines, is utterly frivolous. It is on a par with the statement of a trashy compilation issued soon afterward that at exactly twenty minutes after ten on the night of April 14th twenty-two "conspirators" severed twenty-two wires leading from the War Department to forts and outposts.

It should be remembered that the telegraph was in 1865 a comparatively recent invention, the first line—between Washington and Baltimore—having been opened in 1844. In March 1857 Charles A. Tinker, then operator in the Tazewell House, Pekin, Illinois, and later one of the War Department's cipher operators during the Civil War, had explained to Abraham Lincoln the practical workings of "the new and mysterious force." On March 5th, 1865—the day after Lincoln's second inaugural—messages were sent direct from New York to San Francisco, and this was considered a remarkable feat, the length of wire being the greatest ever worked over in one circuit. "The wires worked well," commented the *Intelligencer*, "though it rained at several points on the line." Thomas A. Edison gave numerous amusing reminiscences of an operator's trials and difficulties in those days of faulty equipment, when reception was at times so interrupted that he had to conjecture or invent one-fifth of the "press report." Temporary suspension during the night of April 14th was purely a coincidence, without sinister meaning, and Eckert's statements make the circumstances sufficiently intelligible.

The murder of Abraham Lincoln was the dramatic high spot of the nation's history, leaving the performance upon the stage "a vague phantasmagoria" in the memories of those that saw and heard it, and the performers "the thinnest of specters."

The awful tragedy in the box makes everything else seem pale and unreal. Here were five human beings in a narrow space—the greatest man of his time, in the glory of the most stupendous success in our

<sup>57</sup> Fortieth Congress, 1st session, House Report No. 7; p. 673.



history, the idolized chief of a nation already mighty, with illimitable vistas of grandeur to come; his beloved wife, proud and happy; a pair of betrothed lovers, with all the promise of felicity that youth, social position, and wealth could give them; and this young actor, handsome as Endymion upon Latmos, the pet of his little world. The glitter of fame, happiness, and ease was upon the entire group, but in an instant everything was to be changed with the blinding swiftness of enchantment. Quick death was to come on the central figure of that company—the central figure, we believe, of the great and good men of the century. Over all the rest the blackest fates hovered menacingly—fates from which a mother might pray that kindly death would save her children in their infancy. One was to wander with the stain of murder on his soul, with the curses of a world upon his name, with a price set upon his head . . .; the stricken wife was to pass the rest of her days in melancholy and madness; of those two young lovers, one was to slay the other, and then end his life a raving maniac.<sup>58</sup>

To a certain occasion when the natives struck banefully at them in the darkness, the old Spanish conquerors of Mexico gave the name *Noche Triste*, or sorrowful night. The night of Good Friday in 1865 was the *Noche Triste* of the national capital, bringing in its train “Black Easter” to the city and to loyal hearts throughout the North.

<sup>58</sup> Nicolay and Hay, vol. x, p. 295.

## Ten . . . . . FLIGHT'S END

WHERE was John Booth? Apparently in a dozen places. He was seen repeatedly in Pennsylvania—on a train from Reading to Pottsville, at Tamaqua, at Greensburg, at Titusville. The man at Greensburg, a Pittsburg dispatch said later, “is reliably stated not to be him.” At Titusville the suspected person turned out to be John G. Stevens of Trenton. A mob of townsfolk was bent on shooting or hanging him, but after he had been identified by detectives he made a speech from a window of the hotel. While traveling, J. L. Chapman of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, was detained on three separate occasions in one day because of a strong resemblance to the fugitive. Daniel Hughes, a Brooklyn saloon-keeper, thought Booth had been in the Hughes establishment. The Chicago police apprehended J. F. Nagle, an actor at McVicker’s Theater.

At Urbana, Ohio, a mustached gentleman said to the bellhop who was ushering him to a room in the hotel: “Is this window on an alley, or is there any way to get out of here?” The bellhop forthwith decided that the man (who later proved to be a railway official visiting the town on business) must unquestionably be Booth, and for a time all Urbana was in an uproar. An officer on a gunboat at Point Lookout, Maryland, was reported to have said that Booth and about twenty other conspirators were at large in St. Mary’s County and that a cavalry squad had had a “collision” with them. Two men and a woman were arrested at Norfolk, Virginia, and a man was followed by detectives from Detroit to St. Mary’s, Ontario, and there taken into custody. Fifteen miles south of Baltimore a man was captured who “answered almost

identically the description of Booth." Preparations were accordingly made for his safekeeping in Washington, "but it was subsequently ascertained that the person arrested, although bearing so singular a resemblance to the criminal, was quite another party."

In his "Fifty Years in Theatrical Management," M. B. Leavitt tells that he was thought by many to bear "a striking facial and physical resemblance" to Booth, who as an actor had impressed him profoundly. "I was, perhaps, four or five years younger than Booth," Leavitt says, "and he was slightly taller, but in a general way we were enough alike to have been mistaken for each other. On one occasion, this likeness came nearly getting me mobbed by an excited crowd, who thought that in me they had the slayer of President Lincoln among them." This was at Eastport, Maine, where he had arrived with a minstrel troupe for a two nights' engagement. He says he was followed to the hotel by a throng that refused to disperse until he had made a speech from the veranda.<sup>1</sup>

Leavitt in his book sets his portrait beside that of John Booth. As we compare them, we realize how superficial was the "resemblance" needed to persuade those whose knowledge of Booth's appearance was gained from crude engravings or printed descriptions.

The *Washington Weekly Chronicle* said editorially:<sup>2</sup>

"So thoroughly was the national vigilance aroused . . . that no man who bore a remote resemblance to the doomed assassin could safely venture beyond the precincts of his immediate home. . . . In Pennsylvania half-a-dozen innocent parties have been held for 'identification;' and it is impossible to tell how many men of the proscribed physiognomy have fallen under the ban of suspicion. This sharp scrutiny originated in an earnest and patriotic motive that cannot be too highly commended. . . . It must be acknowledged, however, that in some cases there have been unwise and unjust manifestations of the popular feeling."

Gossip was that Booth had been "overtaken some miles out on the road leading from Seventh street road"—that a "prominent military officer" had obtained the Navy Department's consent to

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 149, 154-155.

<sup>2</sup> May 13, 1865.

allow the miscreant to be placed on a gunboat. All this was later contradicted. A dispatch said it was "pretty certain" that the slayer had been traced to the wretched little county town of Port Tobacco in Charles County, Maryland, "whence he probably intends to cross into Virginia." It was admitted, however, that Marylanders who had been arrested did not "throw much light upon the subject."<sup>3</sup>

Patrol boats of varied sorts were ordered to the lower Potomac, the Patuxent, and the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. They were to overhaul and fully examine all suspicious-looking craft. Fishermen were not to be allowed to cross the Potomac in either direction between the Maryland and Virginia shores. The *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* of Monday the 17th had this item:

At General Augur's headquarters, at noon, there was a very confident hope that Booth will be arrested before to-morrow. The reasons for this belief it would be imprudent to publish.

On orders from Washington, all steamers and railway trains leaving New York were searched, and a sharp lookout was kept on passengers entering New York from southward. "The detectives," said the *Evening Post*, "are firm in their belief that Booth has not arrived here, and incline to the opinion that he is still in Washington."

The notion that he might be within the limits of the District had been growing in many quarters. It was deemed remarkable that he continued to elude a host of detectives, both professional and amateur. Some guessed that he might have escaped to such Confederate lines as remained—might have found refuge with Mosby the guerrilla, who no doubt had been acting in concert with him. Yet hearsay was that an interview had taken place at Berryville, east of Winchester, between Mosby and General Chapman (First division, 19th army corps) and officers of the respective commands; that Mosby and his officers denounced Lincoln's murder as a calamity to the South, and declared that if apprehended within their lines the murderer would promptly be handed over to the Federal authorities. Hence many turned to

<sup>3</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Apr. 18. *Intelligencer*, Apr. 20.



the argument that Booth lurked in some hiding place in Washington.

True, Sergt. Silas T. Cobb, on duty that Friday night at the Washington end of the Navy Yard bridge, had his story of the two horsemen who crossed into the newly rising light of the moon. The first, he said, rode a bay "with a shining skin"—a horse that had been pressed to its full speed. The sentry challenged him, for it was now after ten-thirty and the latest orders were that after nine in the evening no one should be passed without the approval of the sergeant of the guard. For the most part, those allowed to cross were teamsters or persons on necessary business. The rider seemed calm enough to the eye of Sergeant Cobb, who gave an account of a dialogue something like this:

"Who are you, sir?"

"My name is Booth."

"Where are you from?"

"The city."

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going home."

"And where is your home?"

"In Charles" [that is, in Charles County].

"What town?"

"I don't live in any town."

"Oh, you must live in some town."

"No, I live close to Beantown but not *in* the town."

"Why are you out so late? Don't you know you're not allowed to pass after nine o'clock?"

"That's news to me. I had business in the city and thought if I waited I'd have the moon to ride home by."

There were three or four minutes of this. The horseman was quiet and conciliatory. In telling the story, Cobb said: "I thought he was a proper person to pass—and I passed him."

In not more than ten minutes a second rider was halted at the bridge and the Sergeant questioned him. He replied that his name was Smith, he was going home, and his home was in White Plains, another hamlet in Charles County. When Cobb asked him why he was out so late, he answered something to the effect that he had been in bad company, speaking in so flippant a manner that the Sergeant did not at first pass him but brought him

up before the guardhouse door. There the light fell squarely across his face and on the medium-sized roan horse. The inspection must have convinced the Sergeant that this was some harmless fellow who might better be in White Plains than roaming the streets of Washington; and he, too, was passed.

A while afterward, a third horseman rode up and inquired of Sergeant Cobb whether a roan horse had crossed the bridge, describing horse, saddle, and bridle with particularity before saying anything about a rider. Yes, such a horse had crossed, Cobb told him, and the rider had given his name as Smith. The third horseman appears not to have been catechised as to his name or what had brought him there. Was it possible for him to cross? he asked. Yes, Cobb said—possible to cross but impossible to get back. The Sergeant evidently felt that this cavalcade over his bridge might as well end; and, besides, the third man did not reveal any business that struck Cobb as important, but turned his horse around and rode away slowly up Eleventh Street. This was Silas Cobb's narrative of the two horsemen who crossed—and of the third horseman, who said, "I won't go."

At about one o'clock on Friday afternoon, Davy Herold and beetle-browed George Atzerodt, the carriagewright of Port Tobacco, had gone to Thompson Nailor's livery stable at 299 E Street (north). Atzerodt had with him a bay mare that he left at the stable; and Davy engaged a light-colored roan horse for about four o'clock that same afternoon. John Fletcher, Nailor's foreman, already was acquainted with both Atzerodt and Herold. On April 3rd, Atzerodt and another man (presumably John Surratt) had brought two horses to be put up at Nailor's. These horses, though they had been claimed by Surratt, really belonged to Booth's string, and Booth had paid for their keep at various stables. One of them was the dark bay, blind of an eye, which Booth had purchased from George Gardiner, Dr. Samuel Mudd's neighbor down in Charles County. Atzerodt had taken this horse away on April 12th, and the other was sold. While the animals were stabled at Nailor's, Herold had frequently gone there to inquire for Atzerodt, and Fletcher had seen Herold and Atzerodt riding together.

When Herold came for the roan at four, Fletcher told him not to keep the horse out later than nine. At ten, Atzerodt came for the mare.

"If this thing happens tonight," he said to Fletcher, with boozy incoherence, "you'll get a present."

"Your friend," Fletcher reminded him, "is staying out very late with our horse."

"Oh, he'll be back after a while," Atzerodt replied, and rode away to the Kirkwood House.

But Herold did not return; and, convinced that the roan would be stolen, the foreman went out to look around the streets. At Pennsylvania Avenue and Fourteenth Street he saw Davy and the missing property, and he shouted: "You get off that horse now—you've had it long enough!" Herold paid no attention.

. . . He put spurs into the horse and went up Fourteenth street as fast as the horse could go. I kept sight of him until he turned east into F street. Then I returned back to the stable, and I saddled and bridled a horse and went after him. I knew that Atzerodt had to cross the Navy Yard bridge, and that this Herold was an acquaintance of his. I knew he [Atzerodt] had to cross the bridge to go to his home [in Port Tobacco].<sup>4</sup>

So, on this chance, Fletcher had ridden down to the head of the Navy Yard bridge at Eleventh Street (east). He had urged his horse to the bridge, but now he rode slowly back into town; and, in a forlorn hope, he asked the foreman of another stable whether the roan had been brought there.

"No," said the man, "but you'd better keep in, for President Lincoln has been shot and Secretary Seward is almost dead."

Whereupon Fletcher made for his own stable, put the horse in its stall, and sat down just outside the office window. Among the excited people that drifted by, he heard somebody saying that "it was men riding on horseback that had shot President Lincoln." This roused anew the weary Fletcher's suspicions. He walked out to Fourteenth Street and inquired of a cavalry sergeant whether any stray horses had been picked up. The man said they had, and suggested that Fletcher go to the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police on Tenth Street. Fletcher accordingly reported at head-

<sup>4</sup>Fletcher's testimony at the Surratt Trial ("The Reporter," vol. iii, p. 7).

quarters, 483 Tenth Street, and told his story; and they set down his name among "Names of the Witnesses who made Statements relative to the Assassination of the President."

From there a detective took him to General Augur's headquarters, where he gave the General a description of Herold. By that time it was two o'clock of the morning of April 15th. Beside Augur's desk lay a saddle and a bridle, and Fletcher knew them. They had been on the dark-bay horse, blind of one eye, when Atzerodt took it from Nailor's on April 12th. Fletcher told General Augur about this, too, but had trouble with Atzerodt's name, which (or at least some form of it) had to be obtained from Nailor's files.

It seemed that a Lieutenant Toffey had found the dark-bay horse near Lincoln Branch Barracks, some three quarters of a mile east of the Capitol, and had brought it to the headquarters of General Augur. But this was not the horse on which either Herold or Atzerodt had ridden away from Nailor's stable, and the Branch Barracks were a mile from the Navy Yard bridge. Who had been riding the horse, and why had it been abandoned? It was all a puzzle—a puzzle that John Fletcher, his adventure over, resigned to General Augur and the General's associates.

Silas Cobb's account of the three horsemen might mean much—or little. Herold had taken the roan horse from Nailor's stable; but was he certainly the second rider across the Navy Yard bridge? Was it even positive that Booth was the first? On Tuesday the 18th the *Intelligencer*, Washington's most conservative newspaper, had this front-page article:

#### HIGHLY IMPORTANT.

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#### THE ASSASSIN'S COAT FOUND.

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Yesterday a light-colored sack coat, fully answering to the description of that worn by the attempted assassin of the Messrs. Seward, was found near Fort Saratoga, which is situated on the north of the city, not far from the Soldiers' Home. The coat was stained with blood. In one of the pockets were found a false mustache and a small brush.

The coat and the articles found in it were delivered at the Provost



Marshal's office. It is believed that this discovery will furnish an additional clue to the route of the criminal. The circumstances would seem to throw discredit on the commonly received theory, (at least as to one of them,) that the suspected parties crossed the Navy Yard bridge on Friday night.

To be sure, the first horseman had given his name as Booth; but it was almost incredible that the real Booth would do that. A more plausible view was expressed in the conservative *Evening Post* of New York, which printed this from its regular Washington correspondent:<sup>5</sup>

There are many intelligent persons who believe that Booth still lurks in some hiding place in Washington. The detectives generally believe that the horsemen who rode in haste over the Navy Yard bridge on the fatal Friday night were decoys, and that Booth was not one of them.

It was openly asserted in Washington's *Intelligencer* and *Republican* (Hanscom's paper) that Booth was hiding in the District and that every house within its borders ought to be searched. Superintendent Richards was of the same mind, but complained that he had no authority and that Mayor Wallach gave him no support. To this the Mayor replied that, as head of the Metropolitan Police, Richards took orders not from him but from the Police Commissioners.

A letter from Boston informed the Secretary of War that Booth was secreted in Washington "up stairs in a concealed closet" but at times went out "in the disguise of a negro." From New York, "Justice" wrote to suggest: "Perhaps he is in bed, with the cap and nightgown of a female, feigning sickness." The notion of feminine disguise was advanced by many, and various changes were rung upon it. A Philadelphian urged that Ford's Theatre be ransacked for hiding places and for secret passages to neighboring houses.<sup>6</sup>

The Mayor ordered that "all drinking saloons and places where liquor is sold" be closed and remain closed until after the President's funeral. Artemus Ward had written:

Washington, D. C., is the capital of our once happy country, if I may be allowed to koin a frase. The D. C. stands for Desprit Cusses, a

<sup>5</sup> Apr. 21; p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Baker, "History of the United States Secret Service"; pp. 548-554.

numerosity of which abounds here, the most of whom persess a Romantic pashun for gratitious drinks.

Knowing his city, the Mayor was determined to keep it for the time being as sober as possible. The *Intelligencer* observed:

THE HABILIMENTS OF MOURNING are everywhere exhibited, and the deep grief universally felt is perhaps nowhere made more manifest. Scarcely a window or doorway in the city but is covered with crape. Yet these outside symbols but faintly express the poignant regret and profound humiliation of the community at an act so atrocious.

Each day, mingled with announcements of Thoreau's "Cape Cod" and the second volume of Lyman Beecher's autobiography, the Washington press carried advertisements of black crêpe, black alpaca, black mousseline, black gloves.

Called from New York by Stanton, Col. L. C. Baker, head of the National Detective Police, arrived in Washington on Sunday morning, April 16th. "Well, Baker," was Stanton's greeting, "they have now performed what they have long threatened to do. You must go to work." Those who already were in the field were not at all disposed to share with Baker the clues they might have. The trail was cold and he must work alone.

Colonel Baker had many enemies in his own day and by certain subsequent writers has been presented as an unrelieved villain. As a matter of fact he was a skillful and fearless detective but by nature high-strung, waspish, and aggressive; in the performance of his thankless duties he incurred the dislike of many to whom he refused to show favor. Under emergency conditions Baker hit sharply and effectively at bounty-broking and bounty-jumping, at gross irregularities in the army, at miscellaneous evils. He stepped upon many toes, was accused of being another Fouché, wrote in his own defense the badly titled "History of the United States Secret Service." When quick action was desired and others seemed resourceless, it was to Baker that Stanton turned.

Others of the alleged conspirators were rounded up—Arnold was brought from Old Point, O'Laughlin was arrested in Baltimore; Atzerodt, who had been deputed to kill Vice-President Johnson and had registered at the Kirkwood House, lacked stomach for this enterprise and, after wandering aimlessly about the

city, betook himself to Montgomery County, Maryland, where he was seized at the house of a cousin named Richter. Spangler was easily found at his boarding-house.

Mrs. Surratt and all under her roof were arrested in the dead of night, and, as it strangely happened, Paine was apprehended at the same time and place. While the officers were within, Paine came to the door. He carried a pickax on his shoulder and wore a cap improvised from the sleeve of a shirt or a fragment of underwear. Mrs. Surratt had sent for him, he said, to dig a gutter, and he had come to inquire when he should start work in the morning. According to the officer in charge, Mrs. Surratt denied that she knew the man or had sent for him; and he was arrested as a suspicious character. Not until later did the authorities discover that they had bagged a prize—the formidable desperado who had swept through the house of the Secretary of State, leaving wreck behind. It was Paine who had ridden and then abandoned the bay horse, blind of one eye, that Lieutenant Toffey had found near Lincoln Branch Barracks. He seems to have been without funds, and he drifted back to Washington, only to walk into the open arms of the War Department.

Weichmann, eventually a storm center of discussion, appears to have saved his life by now becoming the prosecution's chief witness. One of the other inmates of Carroll prison said to him in jest:

"Weichmann, do you know that some one in room 37 is going to be taken out tonight and hanged?"

Feeling his neck, Weichmann answered, "I am in 37—and if it was me, I would rather be shot than hanged!"

Tom Smart, one of the deputy keepers at Carroll prison, said that Weichmann was the most frightened witness he had ever seen and probably knew as much about the murder as any one of the "conspirators." Whatever we may think of this, we cannot wholly disregard the words of the Confederate emissary Augustus Howell, who in an unpublished holograph statement wrote:

. . . Weichman allso states he never gave any information from his Books—that allso is false, he gave me information and said it came from his Books in his office . . . he obtained his office in the War Department with the express understanding with Surratt that he W—



was to furnish Surratt with all information that came under his notice from time to time to be transmitted South—and he did furnish it yet he loved his Government. . . .

he . . . rec<sup>d</sup> dispatches for Surratt from Booth and took charge of the whole business [of the abduction plot] in Surratts absence yet he knew nothing of their intention or their business, now will any Sensible man contend that Booth would have trusted a matter of such great importance and Risk to himself in Weichmans hands unless he had a perfect understanding about the matter with Weichman <sup>7</sup>

Edward V. Murphy of Washington, afterward for many years official reporter to the United States Senate, was a member of the Military Commission's official reporting staff at the Conspiracy Trial. On the basis of a first-hand acquaintance with the day-by-day course of the trial, he believed Mrs. Surratt innocent, and Atzerodt and Paine the only defendants likely to have been sentenced to death in a civil court. He knew Weichmann, with whom he had attended the Philadelphia High School, and recognized him in the office of Col. H. L. Burnett, Special Judge Advocate of the Commission. Murphy stated:<sup>8</sup>

The following morning I saw Weichmann in manacles being escorted by an armed guard of soldiers to the War Department. The next day I learned that he was charged with being in the conspiracy to murder the President.

Weichmann knew he was dangerously vulnerable at some point—that much is evident. Only thus can we explain the ingenious fluency with which he swore away the life of a woman who had befriended him.

Jennie Gourlay's benefit was never given; but Miss Gourlay said that Good Friday's performance was not actually the last in Ford's. By order of the War Department the company was assembled to present "Our American Cousin" behind closed doors, the object apparently being to determine whether collusion had been possible between John Booth and those on the stage. Official photographs were made to record the stage-set and the front of the box as each had looked when the shot was fired. Soldiers of the

<sup>7</sup> In the John T. Ford Papers.

<sup>8</sup> New York Times, Apr. 9, 1916, magazine section; pp. 8-9.



Veteran Reserve Corps were kept on guard in the building, yet stories were current, worthy of Sue or Gaboriau, that somewhere in its rambling confines or, it might be, in passages beneath it, John Booth still prowled.

It was said that on Good Friday morning all the other boxes had been engaged by persons unknown. "The question now arises," maintained the *Cincinnati Gazette* of April 20th, "who rented the boxes, and did it not naturally arouse suspicions on the part of somebody connected with the theatre, to know that all the boxes were rented and yet not occupied? Events will soon determine these mysteries."

The three Ford brothers were haled to the Carroll prison and it was believed in the family that the health of James R. Ford was definitely affected. Included in the John T. Ford Papers are many notes throwing new light on the rigors of Washington's military prisons, on the implacable Stanton, on the bitterness that sprang up in the wake of the murder. Harry Ford, who in after years declared he "would not have missed the experience for a great deal," said the Carroll was filled with a rare mixture—bounty-jumpers, deserters, prisoners of state, "men of every station." He remembered April 19th, when, after the funeral ceremonies in the East Room of the Executive Mansion, Lincoln's body was escorted to the Capitol, there to lie in state in the rotunda. "I could see nothing," he said, "but could hear the solemn booming of guns, the dismal beating of muffled drums, playing dead marches, and the steady tramp of feet. . . . We did not know but the people in their excitement would mob the prison and lynch us, for some of the men arrested had been stoned in the streets." <sup>9</sup>

Spirited out of Cincinnati, "June" Booth came to Philadelphia only to be arrested. Edwin Booth retired from the stage but his life was threatened. A guard was placed in Asia's house. "Doc" Booth, just back from an Australian trip, was jailed in New York. John S. Clarke was imprisoned. The newspapers, Asia wrote bitterly, "teemed with the most preposterous adventures, and eccentricities, and ill deeds of the vile Booth family. The tongue of every man and woman was free to revile and insult us."

<sup>9</sup> New York *Evening Post*, July 8, 1884.

In the latter part of November 1864 John Booth had left with the Clarkes a packet whose contents were unknown to them but which at his request was put in safekeeping. In January 1865 he asked for and returned it. After the murder, Asia opened the packet and, having destroyed "an envelope with a man's name upon it," turned over the remainder of the contents to her husband. There were United States 5-20 bonds in the amount of \$3,000; \$1,000 in Philadelphia municipal "sixes"; an assignment of oil land in Pennsylvania to Junius; a note for Mary Ann Booth; and a letter that was delivered to Marshal Millward of Philadelphia, who immediately gave it to the press. This letter, written at the time when John Booth began to devote himself in earnest to the abduction plot, is the longest and most elaborate piece of writing we have from him, and it gives us, in both matter and style, an understanding of the ferment at work in him.<sup>10</sup>

—————, —————, 1864

MY DEAR SIR: You may use this as you think best. But as *some* may wish to know *when*, *who*, and *why*, and as I know not *how* to direct, I give it (in the words of your master)

*"To whom it may concern:"*

Right or wrong, God judge me, not man. For be my motive good or bad, of one thing I am sure, the lasting condemnation of the North.

I love peace more than life. Have loved the Union beyond expression. For four years have I waited, hoped, and prayed for the dark clouds to break, and for a restoration of our former sunshine. To wait longer would be a crime. All hope for peace is dead. My prayers have proved as idle as my hopes. God's will be done. I go to see and share the bitter end.

I have ever held the South were right. The very nomination of Abraham Lincoln, four years ago, spoke plainly war—war upon Southern rights and institutions. His election proved it. "Await an overt act." Yes, till you are bound and plundered. What folly! The South were wise. Who thinks of arguments or patience when the finger of his enemy presses on the trigger? In a *foreign* war, I, too, could say, "Country, right or wrong." But in a struggle *such as ours* (where the brother tries to pierce the brother's heart), for God's sake choose the right. When a country like this spurns *justice* from her side she forfeits the

<sup>10</sup> The text here introduced is based on that in *Forney's War Press* (Philadelphia), Apr. 22, 1865. See "The Unlocked Book" (pp. 124-125) and J. S. Clarke's affidavit before Judge Advocate Turner, May 6, 1865 (in the archives of the Judge Advocate General).

allegiance of every honest freeman and should leave him, untrammelled by any fealty soever, to act as his conscience may approve. People of the North, to hate tyranny, to love liberty and justice, to strike at wrong and oppression, was the teaching of our fathers. The study of our early history will not let me forget it, and may it never.

This country was formed for the *white*, not for the black man. And, looking upon *African slavery* from the same standpoint held by the noble framers of our Constitution, I, for one, have ever considered it one of the greatest blessings (both for themselves and us) that God ever bestowed upon a favored nation. Witness heretofore our wealth and power; witness their elevation and enlightenment above their race elsewhere. I have lived among it most of my life, and have seen *less* harsh treatment from master to man than I have beheld in the North from father to son. Yet, Heaven knows, *no one* would be willing to do *more* for the negro race than I, could I but see a way to *still better their condition*. But Lincoln's policy is only preparing a way for their total annihilation. The South *are not, nor have they been, fighting* for the continuation of slavery. The first battle of Bull Run did away with that idea. Their causes *since for war* have been as *noble and greater far than those that urged our fathers on*. *Even* should we allow they were wrong at the beginning of this contest, *cruelty and injustice* have made the wrong become *the right*, and they stand now (before the wonder and admiration of the world) as a noble band of patriotic heroes. Hereafter, reading of *their deeds*, Thermopylæ will be forgotten.

When I aided in the capture and execution of John Brown (who was a murderer on our western border and who was fairly *tried and convicted* before an impartial judge and jury, of treason, and who, by the way, has since been made a god) I was proud of my little share in the transaction, for I deemed it my duty, and that I was helping our common country to perform an act of justice. But what was a crime in poor John Brown is now considered (by themselves) as the greatest and only virtue of the whole Republican party. Strange transmigration! *Vice* to become a *virtue*, simply because *more* indulge in it!

I thought then, *as now*, that the Abolitionists were *the only traitors* in the land and that the entire party deserved the same fate as poor old Brown, not because they wished to abolish slavery, but on account of the means they have ever endeavored to use to effect that abolition. If Brown were living I doubt whether he *himself* would set slavery against the Union. Most, or many in the North do, and openly curse the Union, if the South are to return and retain a *single right* guaranteed to them by every tie which we once revered *as sacred*. The South can make no choice. It is either extermination or slavery for *themselves* (worse than death) to draw from. I know *my* choice. I have also studied hard to know upon what grounds the right of a State to secede



has been denied, when our very name, United States, and the Declaration of Independence, *both* provide for secession.

But there is no time for words. I write in haste. I know how foolish I shall be deemed for taking such a step as this, where, on the one side, I have many friends and everything to make me happy, where my profession *alone* has gained me an income of *more than* twenty thousand dollars a year, and where my great personal ambition in my profession has such a great field for labor. On the other hand, the South have never bestowed upon me one kind word: a place now where I have no friends, except beneath the sod; where I must either become a private soldier or a beggar. To give up all of the *former* for the *latter*, besides my mother and my sisters whom I love so dearly (although they so widely differ from me in opinion) seems insane; but God is my judge. I love *justice* more than I do a country that disowns it; more than fame and wealth; more (Heaven pardon me if wrong), more than a happy home.

I have never been upon a battlefield; but oh! my countrymen, could you all but see the *reality* or effects of this horrid war, as I have seen them (in *every State*, save Virginia,) I know you would think like me, and would pray the Almighty to create in the Northern mind a sense of *right and justice* (even should it possess no seasoning of mercy) and that He would dry up the sea of blood between us, which is daily growing wider. Alas! poor country, is she to meet her threatened doom?

Four years ago I would have given a thousand lives to see her remain (as I had always known her) powerful and unbroken. And even now I would hold my life as naught to see her what she was. Oh! my friends, if the fearful scenes of the past four years had never been enacted, or if what has been had been but a frightful dream from which we could now awake, with what overflowing hearts could we bless our God and pray for His continued favor! How I have loved the *old flag* can never now be known. A few years since and the entire world could boast of none so pure and spotless. But I have of late been seeing and hearing of the *bloody deeds* of which she has *been made the emblem*, and would shudder to think how changed she had grown. Oh! how I have longed to see her break from the mist of blood that circles round her folds, spoiling her beauty, and tarnishing her honor. But no, day by day has she been dragged deeper and deeper into cruelty and oppression, till now (in my eyes) her once bright red stripes look like *bloody gashes* on the face of Heaven. I look now upon my early admiration of her glories as a dream. My love (as things stand to-day) is for the South alone. Nor do I deem it a dishonor in attempting to make for her a prisoner of this man, to whom she owes so much of misery.

If success attends me, I go penniless to her side. They say she has found that "last ditch" which the North has so long derided, and been endeavoring to force her in, forgetting they are our brothers, and that



it is impolitic to goad an enemy to madness. Should I reach her in safety and find it true, I will proudly beg permission to triumph or die in that same "ditch" by her side.

*A Confederate doing duty upon his own responsibility.*

J. WILKES BOOTH.

"To whom it may concern" is obviously an allusion to Lincoln's executive order of July 18th, 1864, which began with those words and was issued on the occasion of Horace Greeley's ineffectual negotiations with the Confederate commissioners at Niagara Falls. Booth did not aid in the capture of John Brown, for Brown was already a prisoner when Booth reached Charlestown. It is certainly not true that the South had never bestowed "one kind word" on Booth, although it was on the Northern stage during the war years that his talent developed. The phrase "A Confederate doing duty upon his own responsibility" means, if it means anything, that Booth was not acting under instructions from the Confederate government or from any Confederate official or agent.

Even then, it appears, the American public was not to be denied its tidbit of romantic interest. From Washington the New York *Tribune* learned:

The unhappy lady—the daughter of a New England Senator—to whom Booth was affianced, is plunged in profoundest grief; but with womanly fidelity, is slow to believe him guilty of this appalling crime, and asks, with touching pathos, for evidence of his innocence.<sup>11</sup>

It was asserted by friends of the senator that there had been no engagement—not even a tentative one. "There is no truth in the statement, nor the slightest foundation for it." . . . , said a letter to the Boston *Advertiser*. But Edwin Booth wrote to Asia: "I have had a heart-broken letter from the poor little girl to whom he had promised so much happiness."<sup>12</sup> This would seem definite enough, though we may take no stock in the reports that Booth's fiancée declared her readiness to be married to him, even at the foot of the scaffold. Elizabeth Hale, usually referred to as Lizzie or Bessie—afterward Mrs. Kinsley, later Mrs. Jaques—has sometimes been mentioned as the lady involved. There is good reason,

<sup>11</sup> Apr. 22.

<sup>12</sup> "The Unlocked Book"; p. 127 (English ed.).

however, for believing it was not she but her sister Lucy (subsequently the wife of Senator William E. Chandler of New Hampshire).

Another lady, however—a lady with no influential friends to protect her—was discovered by the press. It was told that Ella Turner (whose right name was said to be Starr), of 62 Ohio Avenue, took chloroform on April 15th and when found was “apparently asleep.” When she could not be roused, several physicians were called in and remedies were applied. On reviving, Ella asked for Booth’s picture, hidden under her pillow, and informed the doctors that she did not thank them for saving her life.<sup>13</sup>

In the archives of the Judge Advocate General one of the papers found among John Booth’s effects is this brief, hurried missive, tucked away with statements, affidavits, and all the other miscellany of a famous case:

My darling Baby

Please call this evening as soon as you receive this note I will not detain you five minnits for gods sake come

yours truly

E S

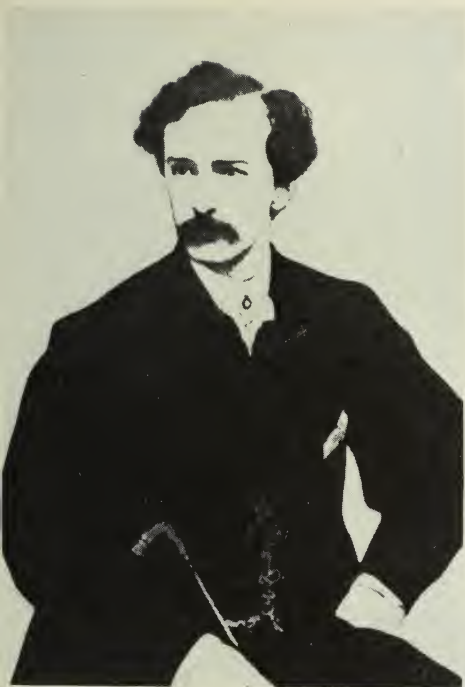
if you will not come  
write a note the reason why  
Washington Feb 7th [1]865

This, we may conclude, was from Ella Starr, whose orbit never crossed Miss Hale’s, whose literacy did not extend to spelling God with a capital, but who wished to die when Johnny Booth fled. She was subpoenaed for the Conspiracy Trial, and W. E. Doster, counsel for Atzerodt and Paine, saw her then and described her as “a rather pretty, light-haired, little woman.”<sup>14</sup> It was decided that her evidence would not be “very much to the point” and she was not required to take the stand.

A cipher code was in Booth’s trunk at the National Hotel—one of the official Confederate ciphers, identical with that found by Assistant Secretary Dana at Richmond in the office of J. P. Benjamin, Confederate Secretary of State. Howell, the Confeder-

<sup>13</sup> *Commercial Advertiser* (New York), Apr. 17.

<sup>14</sup> “Lincoln and Episodes of the Civil War”; p. 276. The note was sent to the National Hotel at a time when John was absent from Washington.



"... My acquaintances claimed he [Booth] bore a striking facial and physical resemblance to myself. I was, perhaps, four or five years younger than Booth, and he was slightly taller, but in a general way we were enough alike to have been mistaken for each other."

M. B. Leavitt in his "Fifty Years in Theatrical Management"

"Look here, upon this picture, and on this" . . .



JOHN BOOTH AND A  
"DOUBLE"

(Booth above, Leavitt at the  
right)





ate agent, had taught that cipher to Weichmann, and no doubt Booth obtained it from the same source. In each instance, Howell knew his man. During the Conspiracy Trial, Weichmann, when cross-examined by Frederick Aiken (of counsel for Mrs. Surratt), admitted that he had learned the cipher from Howell but said he did not know it was used at Richmond and that all he had employed it for was to write out one of Longfellow's poems.

The story was current that an attempt had been made to kill Grant as he rode toward Philadelphia that Friday night. According to Lamon, Grant himself said:<sup>15</sup>

Only a few days afterwards I received an anonymous letter stating that the writer had been detailed to assassinate me; that he rode in my train as far as Havre de Grace, and as my car was locked he failed to get in. He now thanked God he had so failed. I remember very well that the conductor locked our car door; but how far the letter was genuine I am unable to say.

Grant was in a carefully guarded private car and was accompanied not only by Mrs. Grant but by Beckwith, his cipher operator. If any attempt had really been made, it would surely have been referred to by Beckwith in his "Memoirs of Grant's Shadow."<sup>16</sup> The anonymous letter must have been the work of a crank. It cannot be shown that Booth detailed anybody to travel with Grant; and the notion is no longer tenable that in those hours Booth was merely acting for others in some vague, far-reaching conspiracy.

A curious item did, however, appear in the New York *Tribune*:

A well-known citizen of Baltimore committed suicide last Monday, a short distance from this city, by shooting himself with a pistol. No cause could be assigned for the rash act except that he had recently seemed depressed and melancholy.

Subsequent events have induced the suspicion that he was in some way implicated in the conspiracy, and last night the body was exhumed, embalmed, and sent to Washington by orders of the Government.

The affair causes much speculation, and there are many reports in connection with it, as well as some facts, which it is deemed imprudent to publish at present.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> "Recollections"; p. 279.

<sup>16</sup> In the New York *Sun*, Apr. 6, 13, 20, 27, 1913 (edited by W. R. Lee).

<sup>17</sup> Apr. 29.

This is confirmed by Maj. H. B. Smith, who says: "The suicide was buried in Greenmount Cemetery, and in the darkness of night we dug up the body as mentioned by the *Tribune*. This was the only time I ever acted the part of a ghoul."<sup>18</sup> The man had presumably been connected with the abduction plot and, in view of what had happened to those other Baltimoreans O'Laughlin and Arnold, he feared arrest. But John Booth and Davy Herold both had vanished and the net seemed to be spread for them in vain.

In Lower Maryland a small army of pursuers milled about. It is unnecessary for us now to go into all the minutiae of what they did and might have done. After a week they picked up the trail of Booth and Herold, only to see it fade out into blankness. Years were to pass before the mystery was removed, and even then some minor questions remained unanswered.

Improbable as it might have seemed, the man who gave the name Booth to Sergeant Cobb that Friday night at the Navy Yard bridge was actually Booth. "Smith," on the roan horse, was Herold. Booth crossed the low wooden bridge—an old structure that in 1861 had been virtually rebuilt to carry the weight of artillery—and not far from the other (or Uniontown) end he turned to the left and climbed the long stretch of Good Hope Hill. Below him, Washington was already seething with the news of murder, but soon he would be going down into the comparative security of Lower Maryland.

We do not know just where Herold overtook him. They went along what was called the old T. B. road, by Silver Hill, and rode together up to the door of Lloyd's barroom in the Surratt house at Surrattsville. Because of the condition of his left leg, Booth did not dismount. The leg was now swollen and painful, and he was sure he had injured it when he made that awkward landing on the stage.

When the abduction plot was ripening, John Surratt had left two carbines and some rope with Lloyd. He had gone with Lloyd to an unfinished room at the back part of the house and shown

<sup>18</sup> "Between the Lines"; p. 310.

him how these things could be hidden there. The drunken and irresponsible Lloyd afterward testified that Mrs. Surratt had warned him, when Louis Weichmann drove her to Surrattsville on the afternoon of April 14th, to have the shooting-irons ready because they would be needed that evening. Inasmuch as Lloyd was sodden with drink at the time—or, as the native phrase had it, “right smart in likker”—little reliance should be placed in him; and after the murder he, like Weichmann, was in mortal fear for his neck. It clearly was shown that Mrs. Surratt went to Surrattsville because obliged to go on a business errand connected with money due her. She took with her a bundle of papers dealing with this matter, and also a package that she handed to Mrs. Emma Offutt, Lloyd’s sister-in-law, remarking that she had been asked to leave it there. It is highly improbable that she had any inkling of what was to be attempted that night.

Her sympathies were, no doubt, with the Confederacy. John Surratt was a runner for it; Isaac, John’s brother, was in its army. Atzerodt and Paine, to be sure, visited the Surratt boarding-house on H Street and made themselves at home in it; but if they looked rather ferocious, with their revolvers, their bowie knives, and their scowls, so did plenty of others in Washington. Mrs. Surratt might well have taken them to be no more than associates of John in the pastime of eluding Federal detectives. But even if she had been cognizant of an abduction plot, that would be quite different from having part in the murder. “She kept the nest where the egg was hatched”—such is the epigram credited to Andrew Johnson. What egg?

This night of the 14th, Davy Herold took a drink out to Booth, and got from the befuddled and sleepy Lloyd one carbine and the package. Then, with thirteen miles between them and Washington, the horsemen started for Doctor Mudd’s. Their way lay through the hamlet of T. B. and along the T. B. road to the point where it crossed Mattawoman Swamp; thence by the road that led past St. Peter’s Church. This meant turning toward the southeast instead of the southwest, toward the Patuxent instead of the Potomac, and delay was risky; but Booth felt he must have his leg examined. Had it not been for his accident, he would not

have gone anywhere near Mudd's house and Mudd would not have been caught in the web that Louis Weichmann and others helped to intertwine about him.

In the dark of early morning there was a knock at Mudd's door. It was about four o'clock, he said.

I was aroused by the noise, and as it was such an unusual thing for persons to knock so loudly, I took the precaution of asking who were there before opening the door. After they had knocked twice more, I opened the door, but before doing so they told me they were two strangers on their way to Washington, that one of their horses had fallen, by which one of the men had broken his leg. On opening the door I found two men, one on a horse led by the other man who had tied his horse to a tree near by. I aided the man in getting off his horse and into the house, and laid him on a sofa in my parlor.

After getting a light, I assisted him in getting up-stairs where there were two beds, one of which he took. He seemed to be very much injured in the back, and complained very much of it. I did not see his face at all. He seemed to be tremulous and not inclined to talk, and had his cloak [Mudd also referred to this as "a heavy shawl"] thrown around his head and seemed inclined to sleep, as I thought, in order to ease himself; and every now and then he would groan pretty heavily.

The younger man, Doctor Mudd said, gave his name as Huston and called his friend Tyser or Tyson. "Tyson" at first wore a mustache and whiskers and was extremely pale. When a photograph of Booth was shown, Mudd said he would not from any resemblance to the photograph think "Tyson" was Booth—"but from other causes I have every reason to believe that he is the man whose leg I dressed." On Saturday morning "Huston" borrowed a razor. After dinner the Doctor went up to see the patient, who kept his face partly turned away. Mudd noticed, however, that the mustache was now gone, though he could not say whether the whiskers were natural or false.

(Many have questioned whether it was possible that neither the Doctor nor Mrs. Mudd recognized a man whom they had received as an overnight guest only a few months before—especially a man so individual as John Booth. Others, in view of the unusual conditions, accept Mudd's statement as given in good faith.)

"Tyson" had wished to have the leg fixed up roughly, "as he said he wanted to get back, or get home and have it done by a



regular physician." Mudd, hurrying more than he otherwise would have, made a splint by doubling a piece of an old bandbox.

On examination I found there was a straight fracture of the tibia about two inches above the ankle. My examination was quite short, and I did not find the adjoining bone fractured in any way. I do not regard it a peculiarly painful or dangerous wound; there was nothing resembling a compound fracture. . . .

I suppose in a day or two swelling would take place in the wounded man's leg; there was very little tumefaction in the wound, and I could discover crepitation very distinctly. It would be necessary to dress it again in two or three days if it were left in a recumbent posture; but if moved at a moderate rate, I do not know as it would aggravate it very much unless it was struck by something.

The left boot was slit across the instep and removed. Written inside was the name J. Wilkes; and when later the boot was turned over to Lieutenant Lovett, this was a means of identifying Booth with the so-called Tyson. Doctor Mudd and an old Englishman named Best who worked about the place, made a pair of rude crutches for the injured man's use.

Before seeing Mudd's sworn statement,<sup>19</sup> from which the preceding quotations have been made, the present writer submitted the evidence at hand to Dr. Isadore Zadek, well-known surgeon of New York. It is worthy of note that on this basis Doctor Zadek gave the following expert opinion regarding Booth's fracture:

It appears to have been a transverse fracture of the left tibia, about two inches above the ankle; either incomplete or impacted.

It is, therefore, altogether clear that no proper ground exists for repeated careless assertions either that the *fibula* was fractured or that the injury was to the *right* leg. (Townsend said, "The inferior bone of the left leg was broken vertically across." [!]) The boot removed by Doctor Mudd and preserved in the War Department, where it was examined by the present writer, is a high riding boot of a cavalry type then in vogue, and unmistakably designed for the *left* foot. Mudd got an old shoe and, cutting down the upper, prepared a covering to be worn in place of the boot.

On Saturday afternoon, between four and five o'clock, Booth

<sup>19</sup> In the archives of the Judge Advocate General.

and Herold departed. At Herold's request, Mudd pointed out a short cut to Parson Wilmer's, but Wilmer's was not the travelers' real objective. Maps have traced with great exactitude their route across Lower Maryland; but as a matter of fact their course from Mudd's to Samuel Cox's, where they appeared about four o'clock on Sunday morning, is largely guesswork. Lost in the purlieus of Zekiah Swamp when Herold's knowledge of the country failed them, they were guided to Cox's along obscure trails by a Negro, Oswald ("Ozzie") Swann, whom Booth paid for his services.

Samuel Cox at the beginning of the war owned a large tract of land, with a house of superior appearance for that region, and had from thirty to forty slaves. He commanded a volunteer company at Bryantown, and hence was known generally among his neighbors as Cap'n Cox. Thomas A. Jones, official agent in Maryland for the Confederate mails, was his foster brother.

Later that Sunday morning Cox sent for Jones, and Jones rode over to see what was wanted. Cox told of the wayfarers who had arrived a few hours before, and said that his overseer, Franklin Robey, had taken them to a grove of short pines about a mile to the west, on land belonging to Michael S. Robertson. Booth, he said, had identified himself by the initials J. W. B. in India ink on his wrist. (Jones thought that, if Booth did not enter the house, a light must have been carried out.) Cox asked Jones to take care of Booth and Herold until they could be put across the river, and Jones promised to do so.

For six days of chill and sullen weather the fugitives remained concealed in this little isle of safety. To Herold some freedom of movement was possible, but Booth, disheveled and in pain, lay stretched upon the damp ground. He was "exceedingly pale," Jones said, "and his features bore the evident traces of suffering. . . . Murderer though I knew him to be, his condition so enlisted my sympathy in his behalf that my horror of his deed was almost forgotten in my compassion for the man." Sometimes the thud of hooves and jingle of accouterments told of the near passing of cavalry but the nook was not searched. The two horses were, however, a possible source of danger—a whinny from one of them might arouse the interest of the pursuers. They were accordingly led down into the marshland and there shot—presumably by

Herold, as Cox told Jones. Pumphrey would never have his shining bay again and Nailor's roan would not come back to the stable.

With the food he brought, Jones also brought newspapers. Booth's main concern seemed to be to learn what was said of his deed. Nearly the first question he put to Jones was about that, and Jones told him it was good news to most men of Confederate sympathies. (Jones himself thought so at first but later changed his mind.) He showed Jones the tattooed initials and declared he never would be taken alive. With the countryside full of soldiers and detectives, Jones could give him no assurance as to when it would be safe to cross the Potomac.

Slim and wiry, Jones had a thin, melancholy poker-face and a drooping mustache, and he spoke with a kind of mournful drawl. In the barroom of the old Brawner House at Port Tobacco he encountered Capt. William Williams, who had come from Washington in the pursuit; and the two drank. Eyeing Jones closely, Williams said:

"I will give \$100,000 to anybody who can tell me where Booth is."

Looking steadily back at Williams with what Williams afterward described as "that come-to-the-Lord-and-be-saved expression," Jones replied, "That is a large sum of money and ought to get him if money can do it."

The Confederacy was expiring without paying Jones a cent of the \$2,300 it owed him for his services. He had invested \$3,000 in Confederate bonds, now worthless paper. The war, he admitted, had been a bad thing for him all the way through. But the old allegiance held, and the confidence reposed in him by Samuel Cox, "the best friend I ever had." "I did not know Booth," he said, "but when Cox put him in my keeping nothing would have tempted me to betray him."

On the sixth day—Friday, April 21st—he was over at the hamlet of Allen's Fresh and there heard a cavalry officer say, "We have just got news that those fellows have been seen down in St. Mary's County." Knowing that the troops would consequently be ordered to that section, he hastened to inform the eager Booth that the time for crossing to Virginia had at last arrived. Jones



had ready a lead-colored skiff and had instructed a Negro servant, Henry Woodland, to fish from it each day with gill nets and each day to return it to its hiding place in Dent's Meadow. Between high cliffs, then thickly wooded and covered with a dense growth of laurel, a stream flowed through this meadow to the river, and there in the long marsh-grass the boat was well hidden.

The night was dark. Booth was lifted to Jones' horse; Herold walked alongside, Jones went fifty or sixty yards ahead. A stop was made at Jones' house and food was carried out. "None of the family noticed what I was doing," Jones said. "They knew better than to question me about anything in those days." Some three hundred yards from the river, Booth was helped to dismount, and from there he was supported down the rough path to Dent's Meadow.

Herold took the oars; Booth was placed in the stern, with an oar to steer by; and then Jones lit a candle and by its carefully shaded light pointed out on Booth's pocket compass the course to be followed. "Keep to that," he said, "and it will bring you into Machadoc Creek. Mrs. Quesenberry lives near the mouth of this creek. If you tell her you come from me, I think she will take care of you." Booth paid Jones \$17 in greenbacks for the boat,<sup>20</sup> saying, "God bless you, my dear friend, for all you have done for me." Jones gave the boat a shove—it glided away and was lost in the darkness. "I stood on the shore and listened," Jones said, "till the sound of the oars died away in the distance, then climbed the hill and took my way home, and my sleep was more quiet and peaceful than it had been for some time."

The fugitives did not, however, reach the Virginia side that night. A strong flood tide carried the boat upstream, some twelve miles out of the way, and during the night Booth and Herold put into Avon Creek, a tributary of Nanjemoy Creek. In the morning Herold obtained food from the residence of Col. John J. Hughes at Nanjemoy Stores, and throughout Saturday he and Booth remained in concealment. That night they crossed.<sup>21</sup> They came up

<sup>20</sup> *Frank Leslie's* for May 20, 1865, had a cut of a boat for which it said Booth had paid \$300. See Jones' "J. Wilkes Booth. An Account of His Sojourn in Southern Maryland."

<sup>21</sup> One George H. Owen falsely said (archives of the Judge Advocate General) that he ferried them over for five dollars.



into Gambo Creek, just above Machadoc Creek, in King George County, and Herold walked the mile to Mrs. Quesenberry's. Mrs. Quesenberry sent a meal to Booth; then Thomas Harbin (Jones' brother-in-law) and Joseph Badden acted as guides to the log cabin of William L. Bryant, a farmer living further inland. Bryant's place was reached about an hour before sundown, and there Booth rested. Herold explained that his soldier brother John, after having a leg broken in a fall from a horse, had been paroled to go home. For ten dollars Bryant agreed to convey the loquacious Herold and the close-tongued Booth to Dr. Richard Stewart's, about eight miles away. Doctor Stewart, Herold said, had been recommended to them.

So with the two companions on one of Bryant's horses and Bryant himself on the other, they arrived at Stewart's door. Bryant stated: "I heard the Doctor tell the well man that his brother could not stay there; he had no room for him, he had turned away some Maryland soldiers that day."<sup>22</sup> Stewart said that the fugitives got to his house about eight o'clock and remained not more than a quarter of an hour. The smaller man, who had "a short carbine" and a satchel, informed the Doctor that they were Marylanders, would like to be put up for the night, and wished then to "go to Mosby." They were looking for somebody to take them to Fredericksburg. The other man, wearing "a large shawl," said that he had broken his leg in a fall and that Doctor Mudd had set it.

"I did not really believe he had a broken leg," Stewart said; "I thought it was all put on, although he was on two crutches." Stewart further said it had occurred to him that the men might have been connected with "the vile act of assassination," of which he had heard on the previous Tuesday.<sup>23</sup>

Known for his Confederate sympathies during the war, Stewart had been under surveillance and arrest, and therefore he now felt it prudent to do no more than give these strangers a meal and direct them to the cabin of William Lucas, a free Negro who worked on the Stewart farm. Bryant meanwhile had started for

<sup>22</sup> From the original record (Washington, May 6, 1865) in the office of the Judge Advocate General.

<sup>23</sup> From the original record (Washington, May 6, 1865) in the office of the Judge Advocate General.

home, but, on being called back by the Doctor, he consented to take the pair to Lucas' and leave them there. Though Booth hardly spoke, Herold prattled incessantly—or, in Bryant's idiom, "The well one talked all."

Piqued by Stewart's treatment, Booth sent \$2.50 to the Doctor, with the following note:

Dear Sir: Forgive me, but I have some little pride. I hate to blame you for your want of hospitality: you know your own affairs. I was sick and tired, with a broken leg, in need of medical advice. I would not have turned a dog from my door in such a condition. However, you were kind enough to give me something to eat, for which I not only thank you, but on account of the reluctant manner in which it was bestowed, I feel bound to pay for it. It is not the substance, but the manner in which a kindness is extended, that makes one happy in the acceptance thereof. The sauce in meat is ceremony; meeting were bare without it. ["Macbeth," iii, 4] Be kind enough to accept the enclosed two dollars and a half (though hard to spare) for what we have received.

Yours respectfully,  
Stranger.

The original of this was later obtained from Stewart by the War Department.

That night Herold and Booth were sheltered in the primitive dwelling of William Lucas; and next morning Lucas drove them to Port Conway, where a ferry crossed the Rappahannock to Port Royal. There three young fellows came riding along—three friends who had grown up together and lately had been with Mosby's irregulars in Loudoun and Fauquier Counties. Riding their own horses, they were on the way homeward, ready to give their paroles to the nearest provost marshal or parole officer. Their respective ranks have been a matter of dispute, but their names were Bainbridge, Ruggles, and Jett. Jett, who was only eighteen, had for a time been on duty as commissary agent in Caroline County, collecting the tax in kind and receiving stores from detailed, exempted, and bonded farmers—men who were exempted from the Confederate service and bonded to furnish beef, bacon, and other supplies at government prices. He had, therefore, an extensive acquaintance with Caroline County and its people; and a sweetheart lived at Bowling Green.

Herold at first introduced himself as David E. Boyd and said that the man with him was his brother, James W. Boyd, who had been wounded in the leg in a fight near Petersburg. Before long, however, he admitted his own and Booth's identity; and Jett, though "thrown aback" (as he said) so that he could not speak for two or three minutes, finally consented, with the approval of Bainbridge and Ruggles, to find a place of safety for the outlawed pair.

Booth's injured leg was much swollen and evidently painful; his face was pinched and haggard, and the sunken eyes had a feverish brightness. The heavy mustache was gone, but a ten days' growth of beard covered his face, and his dark clothing looked unkempt. On his left foot was a shoe whose upper part had been entirely cut away. The letters J. W. B. in India ink on his left wrist were a distinguishing mark. He explained that he was absolutely unable to walk any considerable distance, so he was placed on Ruggles' horse, and thus, his crutches carried by Ruggles, he crossed with the others on the scow that served as a ferryboat.

Jett took him to the Peytons' at Port Royal and the Misses Peyton seemed disposed to receive him, but on second thought Miss Sarah Jane decided not to entertain anyone in the absence of her brother Randolph. A Mr. Catlitt was not at home; but Miss Peyton said, "You can get him [Booth] in anywhere up the road—Mr. Garrett's or anywhere else." With Booth on Ruggles' horse, Ruggles behind Bainbridge, Herold behind Jett, the party set out at one o'clock for the Garrett place, about three miles from Port Royal. As they rode along, Booth said that he did not intend to be captured alive.

The unpretentious Garrett farmhouse stood in a grove of locust trees at the end of a lane that led from the highway between Port Royal and Bowling Green. While Herold and Bainbridge waited at the lane gate, Ruggles and Jett went up to the house with Booth. Richard H. Garrett was of pronounced Confederate sympathies and during the war Southern agents in their comings and goings appear to have found a ready welcome under his roof. The two older Garrett boys, John and William, had just returned from service with the Confederate forces. Jett, who knew Mr. Garrett by sight but had never met him, introduced Booth as



John W. Boyd, a Confederate soldier wounded in one of the engagements around Petersburg.

"We want you," Jett said, "to take care of him for a day or so. Will you do it?"

"Yes," Garrett answered. "Certainly I will."

Jett, in his sworn statement of May 6th, 1865,<sup>24</sup> confirmed members of the Garrett family in their assertion that he did not reveal who "John W. Boyd" actually was. Ruggles and Jett went on to Bowling Green, where they stayed with the family of Jett's sweetheart, Miss Goldman; Herold accompanied Bainbridge to the house of a Mr. Clark, about three miles short of Bowling Green.

Booth, glad of this opportunity to rest but mindful that it must be brief, was a rather silent guest. Besides Mrs. Garrett, others in the household were young Richard, a lad of eleven; a sister Annie; and Miss Holloway, Mrs. Garrett's sister. Strangers on unknown errands had lodged there before this, during the war, and had gone their way with no questions asked. After a good night's sleep, Booth spent most of the morning on the porch, from which there was a view of rolling fields and the stretch of highroad. The noon meal over, he went back to the porch and there, in talk with him, Annie said she thought Lincoln's death a most unfortunate thing just at that time. He replied that it was the best thing that could have happened, for Andrew Johnson, a drunken sot, would be President, a revolution would ensue, and this would benefit the South.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, Ruggles and Bainbridge came riding up, bringing Herold with them. They signaled to Booth and, out of earshot of the Garretts, talked with him for half an hour; then Bainbridge and Ruggles started for Port Royal and Booth presented Herold to the Garretts as "a friend." Just outside of Port Royal another Confederate hailed Ruggles and Bainbridge and said to them:

"If you haven't your paroles and don't want to be captured, you'd better turn back. The town is full of Yanks searching for Booth. They say he crossed the river yesterday."

So the two at once rode back to Garrett's and found Booth

<sup>24</sup> In the archives of the Judge Advocate General.



lying on the grass in front of the house. He rose, hobbled toward them, and asked, "Well, boys, what's in the wind now?" They told him, and advised that he and Herold take cover in a piece of woodland just beyond the farm buildings. There the fugitives remained until dusk. This seemed to the Garretts a queer proceeding, and Jack Garrett frankly said so to "Mr. Boyd." It looked as if "Mr. Boyd" and friend were hiding for some reason none too creditable; and Jack said, "You know what you have done. If you have got into any difficulty, you must leave at once." And "Mr. Boyd" answered that they had been in a little "brush" over in Maryland but it was now a thing of the past.

That evening Booth asked Jack to drive him and Herold to Guiney's Station, saying that if they once could get by rail to Louisa Court House he hoped to find near there a Maryland battery which had not yet disbanded. Jack promised to do so in the morning and Booth paid him \$10 in advance. At bedtime Booth asked whether Herold and himself could not sleep elsewhere than upstairs, and Jack got a key and took them out to the tobacco-house.

This building, usually referred to as simply a "barn," was a barn of a special kind. About sixty feet square, it was built with four-inch spaces between the boards of the siding. Before the war, considerable tobacco had been grown on the Garrett place; and the tobacco, after cutting, was hung in this tobacco-house to "cure"—a process aided by the passage of air through the openings. Farming implements were stored here now, and, covered with hay, some treasured pieces of furniture belonging to families in Port Royal.

Jack piled up hay for a bed and about nine o'clock locked Booth and Herold in for the night. There were other doors, however—doors fastened on the inside, and Jack and William feared that their guests, of whom they were by this time decidedly suspicious, might get out and steal the Garrett horses. The brothers therefore decided to pass the night on watch in a near-by "shuck house" or corncrib.

About two o'clock on Wednesday morning the sudden loud barkings of the dogs echoed under the locusts. There was the clank of armed men, the stir of horses; and, looking out, the

Garretts saw amazedly that their yard was alive with Union cavalrymen. Knocks were rained on the side door of the house and voices demanded admittance. Hastily drawing on some clothes, Mr. Garrett went to the door and opened it. Stern faces confronted him, rough hands grasped him, and this angry question was thundered at him:

“What do you mean by harboring the murderer of President Lincoln?”

## Eleven . . . . . THIS WAS HE

ON the morning of Sunday, April 23rd, when Booth and Herold had just landed on the Virginia shore, Col. L. C. Baker sent the following note to Maj. Gen. W. S. Hancock.

General—I am directed by the Secretary of War to apply to you for a small cavalry force of twenty-five (25) men, well mounted, to be commanded by a reliable and discreet commissioned officer.

Can you furnish them? and if so, will you please direct the officer commanding the squad to report to me with the men at No. 217 Pennsylvania Avenue, opposite Willard's Hotel, at once?<sup>1</sup>

By four o'clock on the afternoon of the 24th, orders had filtered down through the appropriate channels and at last reached Lieut. Edward P. Doherty as he sat on a bench in Lafayette Park. The Lieutenant belonged to the Sixteenth New York Cavalry, Col. N. B. Switzer commanding. He selected twenty-six men of that regiment—two sergeants, seven corporals, and seventeen privates—and within a half-hour had reported with them to Colonel Baker. Baker thus described what then took place:

. . . I immediately called into my private office two of my detective officers—Colonel Conger and Lieutenant Baker—and informed them that I had information that Booth and Harrold [Herold] had crossed the Potomac, at the same time pointing out with a pencil the place on a map where they had crossed, and where I believed they would be found. Lieutenant Dougherty [Doherty], of the Sixteenth New York Cavalry, who commanded this squad, was introduced to Colonel Conger and Lieutenant Baker, with the following remark:—“You are going in pursuit of the assassins. You have the latest reliable infor-

<sup>1</sup> “History of the United States Secret Service”; pp. 530-531.

mation concerning them. You will act under the orders of Colonel Conger."

Conger had been lieutenant colonel of the First District of Columbia Cavalry, the nucleus of which was a battalion enlisted for duty in Washington under command of Col. L. C. Baker and commonly known as "Baker's Mounted Rangers." Colonel Baker had been colonel of the regiment, and Luther B. Baker (Byron Baker), a cousin of his, was a lieutenant in the same force. The service of the regiment had now ended and Colonel Baker had therefore been obliged to request a detail of troops. Lieutenant Doherty and his squad were assigned to this duty; and, in a sworn statement by Conger and L. B. Baker, were properly described as "subordinate, though necessary, instruments."

In this statement, prepared for Secretary Stanton,<sup>2</sup> Conger and L. B. Baker said that Colonel Baker told Doherty he "must render them all the assistance in his power" but gave him no further instructions. "Colonel Conger, while in service, having been the senior of Lieutenant Baker in the same cavalry regiment, and of large experience, by tacit consent as between them, took the main direction of affairs when present. In his absence, Lieutenant Baker was the acknowledged director of the expedition." It seems clear from this and from other sources<sup>3</sup> that Lieutenant Doherty was in immediate command of the soldiers (to whom Lieutenant Baker once referred as "dead-beats")<sup>4</sup> but that he was in no sense the leader of the party. Doherty's testimony at the Conspiracy Trial is at variance with his narrative in the *Century Magazine*,<sup>5</sup> nearly a quarter-century later, in which Conger and L. B. Baker are practically ignored. No good purpose would here be served by entering into the disputes that arose in this connection; but as erroneous impressions have been spread, it is well they should be corrected by a look at the record. It likewise remains true that Colonel Baker planned the expedition and laid out its general course. We do not know exactly what convinced him that at last he had struck the right trail. His detectives (including Lieutenant

<sup>2</sup> "History of the United States Secret Service"; pp. 532-540.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Official Records, I, vol. xlvi, pt. 1; pp. 1317-1318.

<sup>4</sup> House Reports, Fortieth Congress, 1st session, rept. 7; p. 488. He explained that they were the kind that had all sorts of excuses for remaining in camp.

<sup>5</sup> January, 1890; pp. 446-449.



Baker), carrying with them likenesses of Herold and Booth, had been quietly at work in Lower Maryland. He himself in July 1861, as agent for General Scott, had crossed from Port Tobacco to the vicinity of Dumfries, Virginia, on a journey to Richmond and back, and was familiar with the main arteries of travel across the "northern neck" and beyond.

Conger's party embarked about four o'clock, Monday afternoon, April 24th, on the steamer *John S. Ide*, and reached the wharf at Belle Plain in King George County, Virginia (sixty miles downstream and a rendezvous of patrol boats), about ten in the evening. It set out at once, taking the way that led to the Rappahannock; and throughout the night Conger, representing himself to be one of a number of Confederates seeking escape into the interior, visited almost every house, inquiring about the crossings of the Rappahannock, whether ford or ferry, and about the doctors in those parts—for it was believed that Booth would be needing surgical aid. Nothing, however, was learned. Port Conway was not reached until noon of the 25th, and there a brief halt was made.

At that time Lieutenant Baker had a talk with a villager named William Rollins (he has mistakenly been called the ferryman) and showed him photographs of Booth and Herold. Rollins recognized the portrait of Herold and said that Booth's picture resembled Herold's companion except that the man had no such mustache. He said that while these two were waiting for the ferry on the preceding afternoon, three Confederates on horseback rode up, and that all five crossed together, the Confederates having taken the strangers under their protection and agreed to give them a lift. Rollins knew that one of them, Jett, had a sweetheart at Bowling Green, and he thought it likely that all hands had gone thither. As he was ready to act as guide, he was forthwith arrested for the sake of appearances, and the party was ferried to Port Royal.

A short distance from there, two horsemen, who apparently had been observing the expedition's movements, dashed away with Conger and Baker in hot pursuit and disappeared from view. Presumably they were Ruggles and Bainbridge. Bowling Green was reached between eleven o'clock and midnight. The horses

were fagged, the men half asleep. An old hotel, where the Goldmans lived and Jett was supposed to be, loomed dark and silent and there was some delay before Conger was admitted. Jett woke to find himself under arrest and struggled into his trousers.

"Where," questioned Conger, "are the two men who came across the river with you?" Baker and Doherty had followed him into the room.

Jett's only answer was, "Can I see you alone?" "You can," Conger said, and asked Doherty and Baker to step outside.

"I know who it is you want," Jett acknowledged, "and I'll tell you where they can be found."

"That," Conger returned, "is what I wish to know."

"They're on the road to Port Royal," Jett said, "about three miles this side of it." He went on to explain that they were at Richard Garrett's and professed his willingness to show Conger the place.

"You have a horse?" Conger inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"Get it and be ready to go," the detective ordered; adding, "You say they're on the road to Port Royal? I've just come from there."

After a pause, Jett said: "Oh, I thought you came from Richmond. You've come past them. I couldn't be sure whether they are there now or not." In his heart he was hoping they had escaped. He would never have treacherously betrayed them; but this was his life against their lives—and the war was over, and he was only eighteen.

He dressed and before long was in the saddle, riding at Conger's side while the drowsy troops clattered along behind. When the party arrived at the roadside entrance to Garrett's lane, Conger and Baker proceeded to explore the surroundings and the cavalymen dismounted, lay down on the ground, and went promptly to sleep. With some effort they were put in motion again and deployed around the house. The elder Garrett, after he had struck a light and opened the side door, assured Baker and Conger that the two men who had been stopping there had gone "to the woods."

"Well, sir," Conger interrupted, "whereabouts in the woods have they gone?"

But Garrett, instead of answering, began to protest that the strangers had remained against his wish. Conger broke in:

"I don't want any long story—I want to know where those men have gone." Then, turning to a cavalryman, he said: "Bring a rope and I'll put him up to the top of one of those locust trees."

At that moment Jack Garrett intervened, saying, "I'll tell you where the men are you want to find. They're in the tobacco-house." He led the way, and in a short time the greater part of Doherty's command was stationed about the tobacco-house, each man having his post assigned to him with instructions not to leave it unless ordered. William Garrett now appeared and Baker sent him for the key of the tobacco-house door. A lighted candle in Baker's hand threw an uncertain splotch of color on the darkness; in the windless hush the listeners outside could hear footsteps within the building.

Having unlocked the door, Baker said to Jack Garrett: "You must go in and get the arms from those men. They know you and you can go in." Then he called out: "We're going to send in this man, on whose premises you are, to get your arms, and you must come out and deliver yourselves up." There was no response but Jack, after some objection, went in and parleying could be heard. "Damn you," somebody said, "you have betrayed me. Get out of here!"

Fumbling at the door, Garrett cried, "Let me out! He's going to shoot me."

"You can't come out," Baker demurred, "unless you bring the arms."

"He won't give them to me," Garrett insisted. "Let me out quick!" Thereupon Baker opened the door and, as Garrett jumped out, immediately closed it. "I'll do anything for you," Jack said to Baker, "except go in there again. He's desperate and he'll shoot me."

"How do you know he was going to shoot you?" Conger asked.

"He reached down to the hay behind him to get his revolver," said Jack with conviction. Conger and Baker now decided to fire



the tobacco-house, and Baker warned those inside that this would be done unless they surrendered within five minutes.

"Well, Captain," was the reply, "that is damned hard, to burn an innocent man's barn. I'm lame. Give me a chance. Draw up your men before the door and I'll come out and fight the whole command."

"We didn't come here to fight," Baker said, "but to take you prisoners."

"Let us have a little time to consider," pleaded the unseen. "Very well," said Baker, and waited.

"Captain," the next words were, "there's a man here who wants very much to surrender."

"Let him hand out his arms," Baker answered, unfastening the lock but keeping it in the hasp. A voice said: "Go, go, you damned coward! I wouldn't have you stay with me." Then followed raps on the door and another voice appealed, "Let me out—let me out!"

"You can't come out," Baker declared, "until you bring your arms."

"Captain," said the first voice, "the arms are mine and I shall keep them. This man is guilty of no crime."

Conger urged, "Never mind the arms. If we can get one of these men out, let's do it." Accordingly Baker opened the door and Davy Herold came out to be seized and passed to the rear, where Lieutenant Doherty took charge of him and bound him to a tree. Baker had all this while been holding the candle, and the man in the tobacco-house now spoke again: "Captain, I consider you to be a brave and honorable man. I have had half a dozen opportunities to shoot you." Conger said it was foolhardy for Baker to hold the candle, so Baker put it on the ground about twenty feet from the door and announced that the tobacco-house would be fired at once. In what Conger afterward described as "a singular, theatrical voice," the man inside exclaimed:

"Well, my brave boys, you can prepare a stretcher for me!"

Conger went around to the corner of the tobacco-house, drew out a wisp of hay through one of the gaps, lit it, and thrust it back. The flames spread rapidly across the floor and soon were climbing the side of the building.



"One more stain on the old banner," hallooed the voice in the same tone as before. Baker opened the door enough to look in, and there, leaning against a pile of hay, a crutch under each arm and a carbine resting on his hip, was John Booth. He dropped one crutch and started toward the fire, then paused and glanced along the openings, though he could see nothing beyond them. Near him lay a table, upside down. He took hold of it as if intending to beat out the fire with it but quickly dropped it and turned to look around the tobacco-house, through whose roof the smoke was already pouring. All at once he noticed that the door was partly open and advanced toward it, dropping the other crutch and moving, as Baker later said, with "a kind of limping, halting jump." He had drawn a revolver and, with carbine in one hand and revolver in the other, was within a dozen feet of the door when above the noise of the fire a shot resounded.

Booth gave a spring, fell in a heap, rolled partly over. Baker, thinking he might try to get up, caught him by the arms and held him as Conger rushed in—then they saw that this was a mortal wound. "It is Booth, certainly," Baker said to Conger. "What on earth did you shoot him for?"

"I didn't shoot him," said Conger with emphasis. "He shot himself."

"No, he didn't," Baker replied, just as emphatically.

Conger raised Booth then, found blood oozing from the right side of the neck, and repeated, "Yes, sir, he shot himself;" and again Baker said earnestly, "He did not." Baker and Conger, assisted by two soldiers, carried him out and laid him on the grass under the locust trees. They threw water in his face; his lips stirred. "Tell mother," he whispered faintly—"tell mother I die for my country."

Meanwhile Doherty's men had attempted to put out the fire, but it had made such headway that nothing effective could be done. The heat in the vicinity of the tobacco-house had become so intense that Booth was taken to the porch of the Garrett dwelling, and there a mattress was doubled up and he was leaned against it. Catching sight of Jett, he asked Conger, "Did that man betray me?"—at which Conger told him that Jett, too, was under arrest. He revived a little and they changed his position several

times, but he could get no ease. "Kill me—kill me," he kept whispering, and they said, "We don't want to kill you—we want you to get well." At the same time they were taking from him whatever articles they could find—the pocket compass, with candle drippings still on it; a handful of pine shavings, apparently whittled to start a fire with; a soiled handkerchief; a meerschau pipe, some tobacco, and a bunch of matches; a bill of exchange in triplicate for £61 12s. 10d., drawn on the Montreal branch of the Ontario Bank; a crystal scarf pin (the gift of Dan Bryant, the minstrel); a pocket knife, greenbacks, keys; a little Catholic medal; a leather-bound memorandum book. These things are specified in the record.

Conger picked some of the articles—including the compass, the bill of exchange, and the memorandum book—and set out post-haste for Belle Plain.<sup>6</sup> From that point a steamer conveyed him back to Washington and about five o'clock he reported at the headquarters of Colonel Baker, who "felt like raising a shout of joy" and immediately drove him to Stanton's residence at 1325 K Street. "We have got Booth!" were Baker's first words as he rushed into the Secretary's presence.<sup>7</sup>

Summoned from Port Royal, Doctor Urquhart said there was no hope for the wounded man, who steadily grew weaker. Miss Holloway, Mrs. Garrett's sister, brought a pillow and placed it under Booth's head, moistened his lips, smoothed his forehead. He asked that his paralyzed arms be lifted; viewed his hands and murmured despairingly, "Useless, useless!" About dawn, between five o'clock and six, he gasped—and his pain was ended. "A stray curl that had fallen over my fingers . . .," Miss Holloway wrote, "was cut off by Dr. Urquhart and given to me."<sup>8</sup> It was April 26th, the day when Gen. J. E. Johnston put his name to the revised terms of surrender. Booth's field glass, which he had left on a book-case, was sent by Miss Holloway to her mother's, about eight miles distant, and later recovered by Lieutenant Baker. It was the field glass, in a package that Weichmann said looked "like

<sup>6</sup> Surratt Trial, vol. ii, p. 311. House Reports, Fortieth Congress, 1st session, rept. 7; pp. 329, 487.

<sup>7</sup> "History of the United States Secret Service"; p. 540.

<sup>8</sup> From her MS. in the Confederate Museum, Richmond.

perhaps two or three saucers wrapped up," that Mrs. Surratt had casually handed to Mrs. Offutt at Surrattsville on April 14th. Lloyd, Mrs. Offutt's brother-in-law, put it with the carbines and other things left to his care by John Surratt when the abduction scheme was in planning; and he had given it, with one carbine, to the urgent Davy Herold.

Booth's face soon became much disfigured. Baker and Doherty sewed up the body closely in Baker's own army blanket, and a Negro laborer thereabouts was hired to drive it to Belle Plain in his ramshackle wagon. Baker, attended by a corporal and an orderly, started on ahead with the wagon, leaving Doherty in charge of Davy Herold, who babbled of his innocence and professed that he had merely happened to be an accidental traveling companion of the dead man. (Booth he at first called Boyd, but this pretense soon was abandoned.) The mysterious burden, with nothing visible save a pair of feet, moved through the April countryside. Though roped down, the bundle shook restively; and G. A. Townsend impressed his readers with an account of how blood dripped through the floor boards and upon Ned Freeman's black hands, and how Ned in superstitious horror cried out, "It'll never wash off—it's murderer's blood!"

Men also dwelt upon the strange coincidence by which John Booth's wound resembled the wound he had inflicted upon Lincoln. As a matter of fact, no such resemblance existed. In Lincoln's case the bullet entered the back of the head below the left ear and ploughed its way diagonally upward, lodging behind the right eye. In Booth's case the bullet entered the right side of the neck, fractured two vertebræ, and passed out at the left, making a hole (as Baker said) through "both sides of his collar." The words of the official description are:

A conoidal pistol ball entered the right side, comminuting the base of the right lamina of the fourth vertebra, fracturing it longitudinally and separating it from the spinous process, at the same time fracturing the fifth thru its pedicle and involving that transverse process. The missile passed directly thru the canal with a slight inclination downward and to the rear[,] emerging thru the left bases of the fourth and fifth laminæ, which are comminuted, and from which fragments were embedded in the muscles of the neck. The bullet in its course avoided the large cervical vessels.



The spinal cord was perforated opposite the fourth and fifth vertebrae.<sup>9</sup>

Booth was fully identified at Garrett's. Even before Lieutenant Baker, quickly opening the door of the tobacco-house, saw a lame man "with a crutch under each arm," Booth's manner was remarked as distinctive: "From the tone of his voice, and his theatrical style, every word seemed to be studied," was Baker's comment.<sup>10</sup> Conger, who had known John Booth by sight in Washington and had been struck by John's resemblance to Edwin, was wholly satisfied as to the identity of the man shot at Garrett's.<sup>11</sup> Lieutenant Baker carried a photograph of John: "I had his likeness," Baker testified, "and identified him by it."<sup>12</sup> Among the personal effects taken from the man on Garrett's porch were not only a bill of exchange made payable to Booth's order, and a memorandum book undeniably his, but also a crystal pin fastened to the undershirt and bearing an inscription showing it to be a gift of Dan Bryant to John Booth. Who but John Booth could have asked regarding Jett: "Did that man betray me?"

William Lightfoot of Port Royal, having served in the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, had returned after Lee's surrender and was at breakfast that morning of April 26th when he heard talk of a shooting at Garrett's. He went up there directly and saw the body of a man lying on the porch—Booth, they all said. Lightfoot was familiar with Booth's photographs, which he had seen commonly displayed, with those of other actors, in Richmond before the war. "I knew him right away," he said in 1928, "and never thought of it being possible that it could be anybody else."<sup>13</sup>

The Garretts recognized the man taken from the burning tobacco-house as the same that had been presented to them by Jett and entertained in their home. Young Richard Garrett became in after years the Rev. Dr. R. B. Garrett, who said decisively:

His [Booth's] remains were most thoroughly identified from a photograph and the printed description that was possessed by the soldiers.

<sup>9</sup> From the exhibit in the Army Medical Museum, Washington.

<sup>10</sup> House Reports, Fortieth Congress, 1st session, rept. 7; p. 488.

<sup>11</sup> Poore, vol. i, p. 322.

<sup>12</sup> House Report, p. 487.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis, "Myths after Lincoln"; pp. 282-283.



. . . I was there and present at the identification. . . . There was the tattoo mark of his initials on the arm, and the comparison with the picture was perfect. God never made two men as exactly alike as that dead man and the one whose photograph there could be no doubt was Booth's. Point by point the printed description held in the detective's hand was followed out. Height, color of hair and eyes, every scar and mark tallied exactly. . . .<sup>14</sup>

On March 11th, 1877, this same R. B. Garrett had written from Leetown, West Virginia, a letter to Edwin Booth in which he said:

An Editor of a Baltimore paper has found out that I have in my possession a lock of your brother's hair cut from brow after he was dead, and that editor has written to me asking for the hair for some member of your family. What I wish to know is this. Did you or any member of your family authorize him to do this? I am perfectly willing to give up the hair to any of your brother's relatives but to *no one else*.

We have never had an opportunity of telling you before but we will tell you now that my mother and sisters did everything in their power to make your brother comfortable in his last hours even when they did not know who he was, and had they known it would have made no change in them.<sup>15</sup>

Obviously the Garretts had no doubts as to Booth's identity.

Arguments before long developed regarding his wound. Lieutenant Baker's account is straightforward enough. Looking through the doorway of the tobacco-house, he had Booth full in view, highlighted by the mounting flames and but a few feet away when the report of a shot was heard. Baker said definitely that Booth did not shoot himself, that the shot came from outside the tobacco-house; and at first he suspected Conger. When Conger denied having fired the shot, Baker rejoined, "Well, the man who did goes back under arrest." After Booth had been laid on the porch, Baker asked Conger whether he had found the man, and Conger answered, "No, but I will." According to Doherty, Conger did find the man—Sergt. "Boston" Corbett, top

<sup>14</sup> From an interview (at Norfolk, Virginia) in the Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library.

<sup>15</sup> From the original at The Players and here printed for the first time by special permission.

sergeant of the detail and the only man picked from Doherty's own company.

"Why in hell did you shoot without orders?" raged Conger.

Assuming the position of a soldier, Corbett saluted and gravely replied, "Colonel, Providence directed me." Which, to use Baker's expression, "rather nonplussed the Colonel," who for the time being had nothing further to say.

Thomas Corbett, hatter by trade and a fine workman, took the name Boston from that of the city in which he had experienced conversion. Thenceforward he was known as a religious enthusiast. He volunteered four times during the war, was fearless in battle and a crack shot. It was told that once, when with a detachment of the Sixteenth New York Cavalry hemmed in by Mosby near Culpeper, he killed seven of the enemy before he surrendered, and that, like one of Cromwell's Ironsides, he shouted as each man fell, "Amen! Glory to God!" Admiring his pluck, Mosby spared him for the horrors of Andersonville, from which an exchange delivered him none too soon.<sup>16</sup>

Lieutenant Doherty wrote that he himself stationed Corbett at an opening in the tobacco-house;<sup>17</sup> and, armed with a Colt's revolver, Corbett (by his own testimony) kept his eye steadily on Booth "to see that he did no harm."<sup>18</sup> Convinced that John was about to start a fight, the Sergeant drew trigger. "I aimed at his body," he said; "I did not want to kill him. . . . I think he stooped to pick up something just as I fired. That may probably account for his receiving the ball in the head."<sup>19</sup>

Arrested and held for court-martial, Corbett was brought before Stanton, with Doherty and others present. Doherty stated that Corbett, though he shot without orders, was a brave and true soldier and had three times requested permission to enter the tobacco-house and fetch out Booth. Stanton said: "The rebel is dead; the patriot lives—has saved us continued excitement, delay, and expense. The patriot is released."<sup>20</sup> Both then and later, Lieutenant Doherty maintained that Booth was shot by Corbett.

<sup>16</sup> *New York Times*, May 2, 1865; p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Century Magazine*, Jan. 1890; p. 449.

<sup>18</sup> Poore, vol. i, pp. 323-325.

<sup>19</sup> *New York Herald*, Apr. 28, 1865; p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> B. B. Johnson: "Abraham Lincoln and Boston Corbett"; pp. 34-38.

Corbett seems to have expected that some credit would be bestowed on him, as upon one that had done well for his country; but his share in the reward was no more than that of the other members of Doherty's squad (fixed originally at \$1,000, afterward increased to \$1,653.85), and journalists portrayed him as a lunatic. Austin Potter, also sergeant in the Sixteenth New York Cavalry, denied that Corbett when in the service was, as he had been pictured, "gloomy and fanatical." Potter wrote: "My recollection of him—and we soldiers learned to know one another as we roughed it together on picket and on scout—is the very opposite to this. I have never known a person so cheerful and heroic. . . . His example has been a source of inspiration to me through all the years since last we parted." <sup>21</sup>

After his experiences in connection with the affair at Garrett's, Corbett became somewhat morose and frequently said that officials in Washington were indignant because his bullet had robbed them of the opportunity to win coveted glory by means of the trial and execution of Booth. R. B. Hoover, who met Corbett at a soldiers' reunion at Caldwell, Ohio, in 1875, tells of his leading a prayer meeting in the village church,<sup>22</sup> and adds:

He was always well armed, in self-defence, as he explained, and his experience while at Caldwell showed that he had some reason to fear violence. He got into an exciting argument with several men one afternoon over the question as to whether Booth had really been killed at all. Hot words ensued, a rush was made towards Corbett, and in an instant the gleaming barrel of his revolver flashed in the faces of his opponents.

Taking up eighty acres of homesteading land near Concordia, Kansas, Corbett, never much of a farmer, built a shanty and won local respect by his skill in bringing down crows and hawks on the wing. He wore an old army belt, from which dangled a brace of pistols; but as a neighbor observed, "in these early days in Kansas little attention was paid to a man just because he felt more at ease in a pistol belt than out of one." Friends obtained his appointment as assistant doorkeeper at the state capitol in Topeka. A story has often been told of how he suddenly went berserk and,

<sup>21</sup> *Century Magazine*, Apr. 1890; pp. 957-958.

<sup>22</sup> *North American Review*, Sept. 1889; pp. 382-384.

with a revolver in each hand, attempted to kill the speaker of the House and others. According to Gomer T. Davies, editor of *The Kansan* and at that time a member of the House, Corbett simply broke up a "mock session" being held by pages, clerks, and other employees. The acting speaker requested "the Reverend So-and-so" to invoke a blessing, and Corbett, to whom this was blasphemy, flashed a thirty-eight.<sup>23</sup>

He was seized and led to jail. Charles Curtis, prosecuting attorney of the county and subsequently Vice-President of the United States, succeeded in having him adjudged insane and he was placed in a state institution at Topeka.

Having escaped to Neodesha, he remained there two days in the house of Richard Thatcher, who had been a fellow prisoner at Andersonville; then he disappeared forever. He had said he was going to Mexico (where, some believed, John Booth had hoped to find a refuge), and rumor made him a patent-medicine vendor roaming the South or a revivalist in the Texas "Pan-handle." A claimant of his pension was shown to be an impostor and was sentenced by a district court to three years in the Atlanta Penitentiary. A real mystery still veils the fate of Thomas ("Boston") Corbett.

Ruggles with the utmost positiveness declared that Booth "placed his pistol to the back of his head, and took his own life." Corbett, Ruggles said, would not, from the point at which he stood, have been able to see Booth; furthermore, one chamber of Booth's revolver was empty.<sup>24</sup> For none of these statements did Ruggles, who was not present, give any authority. Conger, who was there, testified, ". . . I was by the side of the tobacco house. The man who shot him [Booth] was on the next side around the corner of the house [that is, the tobacco-house]." <sup>25</sup> Corbett was looking through a four-inch opening and Booth, in the glare of that burning interior, would have been plainly visible.

As a witness at the Conspiracy Trial, Conger explicitly stated that a Spencer carbine and two revolvers were taken from Booth

<sup>23</sup> A. T. Reid in *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1929; p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Century Magazine*, Jan. 1890; p. 446.

<sup>25</sup> House Reports, Fortieth Congress, 1st session, rept. 7; p. 325.



and that all three weapons were *loaded*. Had there been an empty chamber in any of them, he would surely have mentioned the fact; but even that would not in itself have proved Booth to be a suicide. At the time Booth fell, Lieutenant Baker had him full in view; and, knowing that the shot had been fired from outside, Baker at first attributed it to Conger. Baker's opinion of the John Booth he then saw advancing toward the opened door was expressed in these words:

I think he would have come out and fought the whole command. . . . I think he would have sold his life as dearly and bravely as possible.

When Ned Freeman's rickety wagon at last had reached Belle Plain, where the *John S. Ide* lay waiting, the body was placed on deck; and so dog-tired was Lieutenant Baker that, after calling for a guard, he slumped down there. The next thing he knew, the vessel was approaching the Navy Yard and Col. L. C. Baker was shaking him and telling him to get up. At Stanton's order, the Colonel, with Major Eckert, had gone by steamer to Alexandria to meet the *Ide*, which had arrived at twenty minutes to eleven.

In the Eastern Branch, not far from the Navy Yard, the *Montauk* rode at anchor. Paine, O'Laughlin, Spangler, and Atzerodt were confined on board, having for greater security been transferred from the Old Capitol. Each had an iron weight attached to one leg by a heavy chain, each wore handcuffs joined by a rigid bar; canvas hoods were tied over their heads, covering their faces; and they were guarded by a detail of marines under command of Captain Monroe. Spangler afterward wrote that he "could not see daylight" and that eating was so difficult that even the guard took pity on him.<sup>26</sup> Sergeant Peddicord of the marine guard told how stalwart Paine resented the hood, breaking silence to ask, "What is that for?" Mrs. Surratt (exempt from hood and rigid shackles), Arnold, and others were aboard the monitor *Saugus*, anchored near.

At midnight Sergeant Peddicord, on waking his relief, Sergeant

<sup>26</sup> John T. Ford Papers. It has been stated that Paine was on the *Saugus*. He may later have been removed thither; but he was brought, Peddicord says definitely, from shore to the *Montauk* and confined in the chain locker.

Hartley, told him that Captain Monroe and Lieutenant Young were "looking for something to come up the river." He then turned in until six o'clock. The sergeants had berths inside the monitor's turret, while the remainder of the guard slept on deck beneath an awning. In the morning at six, Hartley said to Peddicord, "Come out here. I have something for you." On a carpenter's bench under the awning lay the body of a man wrapped in a soldier's blanket.

"Take charge of this body," Hartley ordered, "and allow no one to touch it without orders from Colonel Baker."

Peddicord stated in 1903 (he was then Dr. J. M. Peddicord, a dentist of Roanoke, Virginia):

It was the body of the assassin, John Wilkes Booth, which had been brought up the river during the night. . . . At breakfast, when relieved by Hartley while I was eating, we unwrapped the face and compared it with a photograph, and I also remember the letters in India ink, on the back of his hand, in pale, straggling characters, "J. W. B.," as a boy would have done it.<sup>27</sup>

These were the very same initials that, with like phraseology, Asia Booth Clarke (writing in distant England a biographical sketch that first saw the light in 1938) said John, "when a little boy," had "clumsily marked."

Soon barges were rowed out from the Navy Yard to the monitor, bringing Holt, the Judge Advocate General; unwearied Colonel Baker; Surgeon-General J. K. Barnes, attended by a hospital steward with a case of instruments. To the throngs that collected along the shore, the presence of these three was in itself a token of some grave matter afoot. Others, officers and civilians, joined the group around the carpenter's bench, where Sergeant Peddicord remained on duty.

In the course of that forenoon of April 27th an autopsy was held under the direction of Surgeon-General Barnes. Peddicord saw it all, and before it was over he managed to snip from "about the top" of the head a "lock of fine black hair."

The bandage was carefully removed from the injured leg, which was then examined; and after this the wound in the neck was duly inspected. An assistant cut out the third, fourth, and

<sup>27</sup> Roanoke *Evening News*, June 6, 1903.

fifth vertebræ, the object being to trace unmistakably the entire course of the fatal bullet. To show the fracture and lesion that caused death, these vertebræ, with the accompanying bit of spinal cord, were placed among the exhibits of the Army Medical Museum. There was no truth whatever in the report that the body was dissected, though one alleged eyewitness said he had "watched his opportunity" and acquired a fragment as a souvenir!<sup>28</sup> Equally false were assertions that the head had been severed from the body and either put in the Museum or otherwise disposed of, and that the heart had been taken out.<sup>29</sup>

At this time (in the words of Colonel Baker, who was present) the identity of the body was established "beyond all cavil." For this purpose "a kind of military coroner's jury" had been assembled,<sup>30</sup> and under oath a number of these persons stated unequivocally their recognition. The following testimony has been transcribed from the original depositions in the archives of the Judge Advocate General. These were taken on board the monitor by Holt on the 27th, sworn and subscribed to on the 28th.

—Charles Dawson, head clerk in the office of the National Hotel, where John Booth lived; well acquainted with him, thoroughly familiar with his appearance:

Question.—Have you just examined the dead body which is claimed to be that of J. Wilkes Booth, on board of this vessel?

Answer.—I have.

Question.—Will you state whether or not in your judgment it is the body of J. Wilkes Booth?

Answer.—I distinctly recognize it as the body of J. Wilkes Booth—first, from the general appearance; next, from the India-ink letters "J.W.B." on his wrist, which I have very frequently noticed; and then by a Scar on the neck. I also recognize the vest as that of J. Wilkes Booth.

Question.—On which hand or wrist are the India-ink initials referred to?

Answer.—On the left.

—Seaton Munroe, prominent attorney-at-law, Washington, who knew

<sup>28</sup> New York Times, Apr. 29, 1865; p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> L. C. Baker, "History"; p. 541. Baker's testimony in 1867 before the House Committee on the Judiciary. New York Clipper, May 20, 1865. It was also said that the broken leg had been detached (New York World, Feb. 14, 1869).

<sup>30</sup> North American Review, Apr. 1896; p. 431.

Booth socially, was "very familiar" with his appearance, and made "close inspection of the features several times":

Question.—What is your opinion as to its being the dead body of J. Wilkes Booth?

Answer.—I am confident that it is the dead body of J. Wilkes Booth.

Question.—Are there any special marks which enable you to recognize it?

Answer.—I recognize it only from its general appearance, in which I do not think I can be mistaken.

—Charles M. Collins, holding the post of captain's clerk and signal officer on board the *Montauk*, who since 1862 had known John Booth by sight and for about six weeks had known him personally:

Question.—State whether, in your judgment or opinion, it is the body of J. Wilkes Booth?

Answer.—I have not the least doubt that it is the body of J. Wilkes Booth. I recognized it at two o'clock this morning when it was brought on board.

—Acting Master William W. Crowninshield, U.S.N., who had known Booth for about a month and a half and was familiar with his features:

I feel satisfied that it is the body of J. Wilkes Booth.

Question.—Have you seen him frequently?

Answer.—Yes, sir.

Question.—And feel that you cannot be mistaken?

Answer.—I cannot be mistaken.

—Dr. John F. May, probably Washington's leading surgeon, who had removed a fibroid tumor from Booth's neck:

I told the Surgeon General these facts this morning, before I looked at the cicatrix at all, and said that he would probably find a large ugly looking Scar, instead of a neat line. He said it corresponded exactly with my description. The Scar looks as much like the effect of a burn as the cicatrix from a surgical operation.

Question.—Do you recognize the body as that of J. Wilkes Booth from its general appearance, and also from the particular appearance of the Scar?

Answer.—I do recognize it, though it is very much altered since I saw Booth. It looks to me much older, and in appearance much more freckled than he was. I do not recollect that he was at all freckled. I have no doubt it is his body. I recognize the features. When he came to my office, he had no beard excepting a moustache.

Question.—From the nature of this wound, even apart from the gen-



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OF MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH, 1869



eral appearance, you could not be mistaken as to the identity of the body?

Answer.—From the Scar in connection with the recognition of the features, which though much changed and altered, still have the same appearance, I think I cannot be mistaken. I recognize the likeness. I have no doubt that it is the person from whom I took the tumor, and that it is the body of J. Wilkes Booth.

In his "The Mark of the Scalpel," a paper written in January 1887, Doctor May fully explained the distinctive "Scar" referred to by himself and Dawson.<sup>31</sup> A lump on his neck—"on the back of it and rather on the left side"—had annoyed John Booth and he consulted the Doctor, who advised immediate removal. The Doctor told him, however, that absolute rest was desirable, in order that the edges of the surgical wound might firmly unite by "primary adhesion" and leave "so fine a line of cicatrix as scarcely to be noticed." Booth explained that absolute rest was out of the question, as he was playing an engagement with Charlotte Cushman; but he promised to avoid strain upon the wound. He particularly asked the Doctor to say, if questioned, that a bullet had been extracted; but he gave no reason for this and the Doctor made no promises.<sup>32</sup>

The union was at first perfect but one morning Booth entered the Doctor's office with the flesh torn and gaping. He said that Miss Cushman, a robust performer, had thrown her arm so vigorously around him as to break open the wound. Eventually new tissue formed but "*a large and ugly scar*" remained. In 1867<sup>33</sup> Doctor May gave the following testimony:

Q. Describe the appearance of the scar afterwards.

A. It was a scar of some width, that would not have been made by a surgical operation if the wound had united properly, which it did before he had it torn open. It then left a broad, ugly-looking scar, produced by the granulating process, which is the case with wounds torn open. They do not unite the second time generally.

Q. Any discoloration?

<sup>31</sup> This paper was read by W. H. Dennis before the Columbia Historical Society of Washington on Feb. 9, 1909, and printed in the *Records* of the Society for 1910 (pp. 51-68).

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter Seven of the present volume for the barber-shop repartee on the morning of Apr. 14.

<sup>33</sup> At the Surratt Trial (*The Reporter*, vol. iii, pp. 236-237).

A. Oh, yes. The scar is usually of a whiter color after a time. It is first of a redder color, but in the course of time the cicatrix becomes rather whiter and more dense.

The Doctor said that Booth had come to him at least a year, possibly a year and a half, before the murder.

At the Conspiracy Trial in 1865 Surgeon-General Barnes gave this testimony:<sup>34</sup>

Q. State whether or not you made an examination of the body of J. W. Booth after his death, when brought to this city.

A. I did.

Q. Describe to the Court the scar which is alleged to have been on his neck.

A. The scar on the left side of the neck was occasioned by an operation performed by Dr. May, of this city, for the removal of a tumor, some months previously to Booth's death.

Q. What was its peculiar appearance, if it had any . . . ?

A. It looked like the scar of a burn, instead of an incision; which Dr. May explained from the fact that the wound was torn open on the stage, when nearly healed.

Q. How near was it to the ear?

A. Three inches below the ear, upon the large muscle of the neck.

This was obviously very different from the scar that the perjured Mary Hudspeth (or Hodspeth) declared she saw in New York—a scar “like a bite”—on the *cheek* of a young man with false whiskers and small, beautiful hands<sup>35</sup>—the young man being, of course, John Booth!

In “The Mark of the Scalpel” Doctor May wrote that after having seen Booth “in the vigor of life and health” he noted a striking contrast in the “haggard corpse” on which “my mark was unmistakably found.” He had known the living man as “fashionably dressed and remarkably handsome” and now discovered a change in “facial expression.” This would hardly be surprising, for even on the 21st (according to Jones) every step had been a torture to Booth and on the 24th, before the extremity of death, his face was “pinched with suffering.”<sup>36</sup> He had lain in the open

<sup>34</sup> Poore, vol. ii, p. 60.

<sup>35</sup> Poore, vol. i, p. 26. Surratt Trial, vol. i, p. 353.

<sup>36</sup> *Century Magazine*, Jan. 1890; p. 444.



on damp ground through a week of cloudy weather and Potomac fog; had lived upon nondescript food. His dark beard had grown long and the thick, wavy hair was by this time dirtied and unkempt.<sup>37</sup>

The body of Abraham Lincoln was treated with all the preservative art of that day; but when a private view was accorded Mrs. Sara Lippincott ("Grace Greenwood"), who had known him well, and she had remained "as long as I could bear," the face appeared to her "a dread *simulacrum* of the face of our great friend—so unlike was it, though so like. The color was not the pallor I remembered, but a sort of ashen gray; the mouth looked stern."<sup>38</sup> . . . Photographs were made of the dead Lincoln but the plates were destroyed because his expression was thought to be shrunken and unnatural. With a hint like this, mythopœists might declare it was the body not of Lincoln but of some one else that publicly journeyed back toward Springfield

through lanes and streets,  
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land . . .

As to John Booth, Seaton Munroe's first impression was evidently quite other than Doctor May's. To quote Munroe:<sup>39</sup>

I was soon gazing at the remains, which needed no long inspection to enable me to recognize them. The handsome countenance was unmarred by the agony of his lingering death, which I was soon to hear described. There were missing the moustache and the curling lock upon his forehead, which during the flight had been removed at the house of Dr. Mudd. There his broken leg had been set, and its foot was now covered by an old shoe, replacing the riding boot which it was found necessary to cut off.

In his paper, written more than twenty years afterwards, when he was seventy-five years of age, May briefly mentioned Booth's *right* leg as "greatly contused, and perfectly black from a fracture of one of the long bones." This inadvertence may have crept in because, as he stood at the foot of the body, the left leg would have been at May's own *right*. (There is a similar confusion about left and right in the theater, the left of the stage being the

<sup>37</sup> New York *Clipper*, June 10, 1865.

<sup>38</sup> "Abraham Lincoln: Tributes from His Associates"; p. 114.

<sup>39</sup> *North American Review*, Apr. 1896; p. 431.

right of the auditorium.) It may have been due to ordinary lapse of memory. In either case it is of no importance. May knew his sign-manual on Booth's neck; he raised no question whatever concerning that, and Surgeon-General Barnes confirmed him. In his testimony aboard the gunboat on April 27th, May said emphatically:

I recognize the likeness. . . . I have no doubt that it is the person from whom I took the tumor, and that it is the body of J. Wilkes Booth.

To that he swore.

In Washington at that time, among the personnel in the office of Gen. B. W. Brice, Acting Paymaster-General, was Clarence F. Cobb, who had been a schoolmate of John Booth and in 1861 had enlisted in the Union army. He had kept up a friendship with Booth; and when in Washington on furlough, "saw Jack there and he would look at my uniform and chaff me, in a playful way, for being a Yank, and I would chaff him for being a Johnny." On April 27th, Cobb said, General Brice sent for him (presumably knowing of Cobb's acquaintance with Booth).

[He] told me in the strictest confidence, that he wished me to report to General Barnes, the Surgeon General of the army, and go down with him to identify Booth's body, which was on a monitor, lying in the Eastern Branch, off the Navy Yard. I immediately reported to General Barnes, who was getting out of his ambulance in front of his office, on the northwest corner of Fifteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, and when I told him my errand, he said it was unnecessary; that he and nine others had identified the body; that Dr. Merrill, the dentist, had filled two teeth for Booth the week before [the murder]; that they had forced the mouth open and saw the fillings. So the identification was complete. . . .<sup>40</sup>

Dentistry had only just got launched on its career as a skilled profession, and Dr. William Merrill, with an office at 344 Pennsylvania Avenue, was among Washington's better practitioners. His work for Booth must have been done previous to April 1st because the register of the National Hotel showed that John was out of the city from the 1st to the 8th; but that is a minor error.

<sup>40</sup> *Dramatic Mirror*, Feb. 26, 1916; pp. 3, 5. (Cobb was then "a retired army officer and ex-newspaper man" in Los Angeles.)

Conger and Lieutenant Baker were, of course, able to identify the body as that of the man shot in Garrett's tobacco-house.<sup>41</sup> Lieutenant Baker had accompanied it from Garrett's porch to the monitor. Oldroyd, who assembled the Oldroyd Collection and was throughout his life a repository of personal statements, ventured the assertion that practically all of John Booth's more intimate actor friends in Washington visited the monitor and identified the body to their own satisfaction. Men of Colonel Baker's force were ready to escort persons who claimed to have known Booth and from whom it was thought that something might be learned.<sup>42</sup> This doubtless accounts for the presence aboard the *Montauk* of a lady who, having identified the body, clipped a lock of hair. (It was a period when hair, treasured as a memento, was braided into watch guards, fixed in brooches, or tied with a ribbon and hoarded among other keepsakes in bureau drawers.) Returning at that moment after a short absence, the inflexible Colonel Baker took from her the relic she declined to surrender, and then he ordered that the deck be cleared.<sup>43</sup> Stanton had warned the Colonel that every hair of Booth's head would be prized by "sympathizers with the South in Washington."

Hundreds had flocked to the Navy Yard and were trying from there to catch a glimpse of the body and of the proceedings on the ironclad. At nine-twenty that morning Stanton had telegraphed this bulletin to Maj. Gen. John A. Dix in New York:

Booth's body and Harrold [Herold] are now here.

Next day's *Intelligencer* said that Washington had been "electrified" by the reports of capture. "It was hoped that he [Booth] had been taken alive, and that offended justice would be avenged by his summary execution." . . . Workmen in the Yard found it difficult to pursue their tasks because of the crowd, and anybody supposed to be informed was plied with questions.

The purpose had, of course, been to bring to Washington the *living* Booth. On April 15th these orders had issued from the Navy Department: <sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Poore, vol. i, p. 318.

<sup>42</sup> Washington *Evening Star*, Jan. 5, 1907.

<sup>43</sup> Baker, "History"; pp. 507-508.

<sup>44</sup> Official Records, I, vol. xlvi, pt. 3; p. 768. (Cf. Baker, "History"; p. 528.)

Commodore J. B. Montgomery, Navy-Yard, Washington:

If the military authorities arrest the murderer of the President and take him to the yard, put him on a monitor, and anchor her in the stream, with strong guard on vessel, wharf, and in yard. Call upon commandant of Marine Corps for guard. Have vessel immediately prepared ready to receive him at any hour, day or night, with necessary instructions. He will be heavily ironed and so guarded as to prevent escape or injury to himself.

Gideon Welles,  
Secretary of the Navy.

Colonel Zeilin, Commandant Marine Corps:

Have extra strong and careful guard ready for special service, if called for by Commodore Montgomery.

G. Welles,  
Secretary of the Navy.

On the same day Commodore Montgomery had addressed this letter to Colonel Zeilin at the Corps barracks on Eighth Street:

Navy Yard Washington  
April 15, 1865

Colonel J. Zeilin  
Comdt. Marine Corps  
Head Quarters  
Colonel

I am directed by Commodore J. B. Montgomery Comdt<sup>t</sup> of this yard to state, in the event of the arrival of the murderer of President Lincoln, that he will require a *strong guard* of Marines from you to carry out the orders of the Department.

You will please have them ready day or night, and inform me how many you can detail for this service. The Marines will not probably leave the yard.

I am, very respectfully,  
Your ob<sup>dt</sup> sevt.  
J. B. Montgomery  
Commandant.

P.S. It may be necessary to call for every man who can be spared from the necessary posts of the Garrison.

Very resp.  
J. B. Montgomery  
Comm<sup>dt</sup>.<sup>45</sup>

If a living John Booth had been brought to Washington, he would have been placed in irons in the *Montauk's* hold, with other

<sup>45</sup> From the original in the Bland Collection.



prisoners of state already there. When it had seemed possible that a mob might attack the Old Capitol, these prisoners had been taken singly in closed vehicles to the Navy Yard and put aboard the monitor. In case of attempt at escape—which, considering the irons and hoods each wore, seemed most unlikely—the guards had orders to shoot.

Precaution regarding Booth was well-advised. When three prisoners were being marched to the Old Capitol on April 17th, a crowd, believing two of them to be Surratt and Booth, called, "Shoot them! Hang them!" and finally made a rush at the guard.<sup>46</sup> Jack and Will Garrett, under arrest, were landed in Washington from the *John S. Ide* in the early morning of April 27th and escorted by four detectives to the Arsenal, where they remained about five days. When it was learned where they were, a mob made a raid on the Arsenal, "what to do with us I do not know," said Will Garrett, "unless to hang us." The guard was doubled and artillery was posted before the gates of the inclosure. While being transferred to the Old Capitol, the Garretts, surrounded by troops in hollow square, were hissed and followed with cries of "Rebel! Rebel!"<sup>47</sup> It was through motives not of stealth but of prudence that the authorities from the first had planned to receive the living Booth on the monitor, and there they naturally received him dead.

In 1867, before the Judiciary Committee of the House, Secretary Stanton testified decisively in these words: <sup>48</sup>

Q. Have you any reason to believe that Booth is not dead?

A. None whatever. I had a board to inspect and examine his body when it was on the iron-clad, consisting of the Surgeon General and some officers whose names I cannot now mention. Dr. May, who knew Booth personally, was also with the board. They reported that it was the body of J. Wilkes Booth.

Q. Was Dr. May a member of the board?

A. Dr. May was not on the board, but he was examined by the board. I believe that that was the body of Booth, upon the testimony given at the time, as certainly as I believe I am now in existence.

Though there were rivalry and jealousy as to the reward-money,

<sup>46</sup> *Washington Morning Chronicle*, Apr. 18; p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Confederate Veteran*, April 1921; p. 130.

<sup>48</sup> House Reports, Fortieth Congress, 1st session, rept. 7; p. 408.

and charges of foul play in its distribution, none of the thirty-four persons who were judged to have aided in the capture of Booth and Herold ever disputed Booth's identity.

So frequently and positively have the myth-builders denied that the reward was actually paid that a letter to the present writer from Joseph Greenberg, chief of the division of bookkeeping and warrants of the Treasury Department, should here be quoted:

You are advised appropriation for payment of these rewards was provided under the Act of July 28, 1866 (14 Stat., 341). This Act specifically named the persons to whom payments should be made, the general distribution of the rewards being as follows:

For the capture of Payne [Paine]	
(Distributed to 10 persons) . . . . .	\$ 5,000
For the capture of Atzerott [Atzerodt]	
(Distributed to 9 persons) . . . . .	25,000
For the capture of Booth and Herold	
(Distributed to 34 persons) . . . . .	75,000
Total . . . . .	\$105,000

Payment to each person named in the Act of July 28, 1866, was made by separate draft of the Treasurer of the United States issued August 9, 1866, in a total amount of \$104,999.60, and according to correspondence on file in this office each of the paid drafts, aggregating the total sum disbursed, was returned in due course to the Treasury as paid. The sum of \$0.40, remaining on the books of the Treasury on account of fractions of a cent which were not disbursed, was carried to the surplus fund of the Treasury on June 30, 1868.

Likenesses of John Booth were plentiful. With those of other well-known players, they could be had at shops and photograph galleries; and it had been a custom on special occasions, such as benefit nights, to give souvenir *carte-de-visite* portraits of stage folk to the ladies of the audience or to all purchasers of reserved seats. Booth, said Washington's *Morning Chronicle*,<sup>49</sup> had "exhibited his somewhat striking visage on every stage in America, and has had himself daguerreotyped and photographed oftener than he has said his prayers." There were also poster portraits in color, an example of which is preserved in an extra-illustrated volume (formerly belonging to Laurence Hutton) in the Prince-

<sup>49</sup> Apr. 18; p. 2.

ton University Library. On April 14th—as soon as possible after his arrival from New York—Colonel Baker obtained photographs of Booth, Davy Herold, and John H. Surratt, had copies made, and mailed these broadcast, with descriptions and his own offer of \$10,000 reward, to detectives throughout the North, as well as to various local authorities. As to Booth, the *Morning Chronicle* said, “Probably most policemen in this country have seen him, and every one in the two hemispheres will be furnished with an accurate likeness.” . . . The *Commercial Advertiser* (New York) said <sup>50</sup> portraits of Booth were sent “in every direction” in order to “lead to his arrest.”

Photographs of Booth such as Lieutenant Baker had at Garrett’s, or such as Sergeant Hartley and Sergeant Peddicord used on the monitor, were available for comparison. The large reward-poster issued by the War Department under date of April 20th carried at its head, attached within rule borders, three copies of photographs—Surratt at the left, Herold at the right, and John Booth in the center in familiar and characteristic pose. This poster, though now rare, was then widely distributed. At Port Conway, William Rollins recognized the portraits of Booth and Herold shown him by Lieutenant Baker; and when Booth lay on Garrett’s porch “the comparison with the picture,” said the Rev. Dr. R. B. Garrett, “was perfect.” The same Booth lay on a carpenter’s rough bench under the *Montauk’s* awning. There, by the report of an Associated Press dispatch (appearing in the New York *Times* of April 29th), “a photographic view of the body was taken.”

By the time the Conspiracy Trial got under way, on May 12th, 1865, enterprising dealers had been doing a thriving business in pictures of “the Assassin”—small engravings or copies of photographs.<sup>51</sup> A Montreal correspondent wrote to the New York *Clipper*<sup>52</sup> that in October 1864 he had spent an evening at billiards with John Booth at St. Lawrence Hall; and said he: “The photographs commonly circulated at present are evidently correct, as they serve to replace his appearance on that evening very vividly

<sup>50</sup> Apr. 24; p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> In *Harper’s Weekly* for May 6 (p. 286) an advertisement offered photographs at twenty-five cents each, \$1.75 a dozen. News-vendors had portraits for sale.

<sup>52</sup> Issue of May 20, 1865.



in my mind.”<sup>53</sup> The records of the trial show, through the testimony of Sergt. Silas T. Cobb, Lieut. J. W. Dempsey, John Greenawalt, A. R. Reeves, Edward C. Stewart, and others to whom photographs of Booth were exhibited, that the photographs were authentic. There is no support whatever for the preposterous statement that a photograph of Edwin Booth was used throughout the trial as that of John, in order (as has been charged) to bolster the prosecution’s case. Whatever its faults—and they were many—the prosecution would not have been stupid enough to undertake such a thing, nor would defense counsel—including such men as Reverdy Johnson, Gen. Thomas Ewing, and Maj. William E. Doster—have been stupid enough to be deceived. In his argument in the case of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, General Ewing, describing Booth’s arrival at Mudd’s on April 15th, said: “Booth got there, with Herold, about daybreak (Frank Washington). He usually wore a mustache (see photograph).” . . .<sup>54</sup>

In the archives of the Judge Advocate General the present writer has seen a photograph of smooth-faced Edwin Booth. It was enclosed, with an unintelligible penciled memorandum, in an envelope marked “C. Dawson” and bearing the corner card of the United States District Attorney, District of Columbia. This envelope was in turn enclosed in a larger one inscribed with pen-printing: Booth’s Photograph Ex. No. 1. The photograph of John Booth was missing. It was only one of numerous things missing from the records of the Conspiracy Trial. Other things had been misplaced. No appropriation had been made for special care of this material, and in the course of years it, like some other records at Washington, had suffered vicissitudes. But there were supposable reasons why it included a photograph of Edwin Booth. Lieut. A. M. S. Crawford, who sat in the dress circle with Captain McGowan on the night of April 14th, said that the dark man “very strongly resembled the Booths”<sup>55</sup>—not specifying more closely. Even on Sunday, April 16th, it was reported in Washing-

<sup>53</sup> On May 2 the sale of portraits “of any rebel officer or soldier, or of J. Wilkes Booth” was forbidden in the Middle Department by order 95 from Gen. Lew Wallace’s headquarters at Baltimore (*National Republican*, May 3; p. 2).

<sup>54</sup> Mudd, “The Life of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd”; p. 88.

<sup>55</sup> Original statement as written out by James Tanner (Union League Club, Philadelphia).



ton that Edwin killed the President, and John T. Ford heard this in Richmond on Sunday night.<sup>56</sup> It is likely that photographs of all the brothers were obtained by the detectives.<sup>57</sup>

Another possible reason could have been that John without his mustache bore a noticeable semblance to Edwin—and it was known that John's mustache had been removed while he was at Mudd's. Hence it might have been thought that Edwin's portrait would aid in establishing John's identity; and of course this portrait may not originally have been in the envelope marked "Booth's Photograph."

It is to be added that Edwin was subpoenaed as a witness for the defense at the Conspiracy Trial—"to show the influence his brother exerted over weaker minds," wrote W. E. Doster, counsel for Atzerodt and Paine. "He came," Doster proceeded, "but said he knew less of his brother, probably, than any one—that he had had nothing to do with him for years."<sup>58</sup> Hence he was not put on the stand; but he might have been—in which event the use of his photograph as John's would more than ever have been a ticklish business. Under the stress that followed upon the heels of Lincoln's murder, the authorities no doubt often did things it now is easy to criticize; but there really is no evidence of subterfuge or concealment at any time regarding John Booth's identity.

The New York *Evening Post* of Thursday, April 27th, said editorially: "The body of our murdered President is not yet laid in the grave, when his assassin meets his doom, at the hands of an officer of justice." That same afternoon (the autopsy having been completed and the body fully identified) the body again was sewed up in its blanket—and then something unexpected happened. The blanket-wrapped figure must be disposed of, and Stanton, with his usual decisiveness, had instructed Colonel Baker what to do with it. It was lifted from the ironclad's deck into a small boat rowed by two seamen of the crew, and only the Bakers accompanied it. Watchers at the edge of the Yard saw the boat move in an indirect

<sup>56</sup> Ewing's argument in the case of Mudd; Ford's testimony.

<sup>57</sup> *Intelligencer*, Apr. 28; p. 2.—A file of material regarding the Booths was assembled by the War Department.

<sup>58</sup> "Lincoln and Episodes of the Civil War"; p. 275. Mrs. T. B. Aldrich, "Crowding Memories"; pp. 82-83.

course down the Eastern Branch past Buzzard Point, past Greenleaf's Point, and vanish.

Washington's *Constitutional Union* next day had this to say editorially:

Booth's identity and the cause of his death having been established, we suppose that nothing was left for the Government but to put his carcase out of sight, and we presume the place of his interment will not be made known.

The presumption is that the body will be sunk in the sea, so that no one can tell where he is buried.

The New York *Times* of May 1st hoped

the report is true that the government has disposed of the body of the assassin Booth in such a way that its resting-place will never be known. . . . The grave of the assassin of the President, if known, would be visited by thousands from curiosity, and would become a celebrated resort of sightseers, whose detestation of the deed would be overborne or modified by that strange wonder which always surrounds acts of desperate hardihood. We trust the secret of Booth's sepulchre will never be revealed.

The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* thought, however,<sup>59</sup> that "the Government owed a duty to itself and to the country" and that it was "incumbent upon the authorities so to deal with the criminal as to render his fate impressive." Regretting the lack of "solemn and becoming" procedure, the *Plain Dealer* continued:

To make war on the wretched relics of humanity from which life has fled, and which have become a mere piece of unconscious carrion-clay, is a violation of sense and decency. The body of Booth should have been deposited, like that of any other malefactor, in some Potter's Field, instead of being invested with a mysterious secrecy, resembling more an incident in some flash novel than the act of a great nation in dealing with a public criminal.

On May 1st the *Constitutional Union* emphasized the "mystery" by declaring:

The resting place of the body is unknown to the world with the exception of U. S. Detective Baker and another man. They took the body away in a small boat. They are sworn to secrecy.

<sup>59</sup> Apr. 28, quoted in the *Sunday Mercury* (New York) of Apr. 30.

George A. Townsend, young correspondent of the *New York World*, cut loose in this romantic fashion: <sup>60</sup>

"What have you done with the body?" said I to [Colonel] Baker.

"That is known," he answered, "to only one man living beside myself. It is gone; I will not tell where; the only man who knows is sworn to silence; never till the great trumpeter comes shall the grave of Booth be discovered." And this is true. . . . A small rowboat received the carcass of the murderer; two men were in it; they carried the body off into the darkness. . . . The river bottom may ooze about it, laden with great shot and drowning manacles. The earth may have opened to give it that silence and forgiveness which man will never give to its memory. The fishes may swim around it, or the daisies grow white above it, but we shall never know.

This and similar, if less gaudy, journalistic writing must have had a considerable influence in preparing the soil wherein the Great American Myth was to flourish. Already war had largely increased the distribution and influence of Northern papers; and the events attending and following Lincoln's death had further swelled the number of readers. Colonel Baker, to "gratify, as far as possible to do so, the mournful curiosity of the people," directed "some correspondence" (he says) from his headquarters—and Townsend, from whom the Colonel quotes freely, was, as Townsend himself admits, thus censored by Baker.

Colonel Baker's general principle in such matters has been frankly stated in his book: <sup>61</sup>

It may be said, that the deception and misstatements resorted to, and inseparable from the detective service, are demoralizing, and prove unsoundness of character in its officers. But it must be borne in mind that, in war, no commander fails to deceive the enemy when possible, to secure the least advantage. . . . The work of the detective is simply deception reduced to a science or profession; and whatever objection, on ethical grounds, may lie against the secret service, lies with equal force against the strategy and tactics of Washington, Scott, Grant, and the host of their illustrious associates in the wars of the world. . . .

In 1867, when sworn before the House Judiciary Committee, Colonel Baker gave this testimony:

<sup>60</sup> "The Life, Crime, and Capture of John Wilkes Booth"; pp. 38-39. (This paper-covered reprint of eight of Townsend's newspaper letters had a large popular sale.)

<sup>61</sup> Introductory Chapter (p. 44).

Q. Did you ever represent to anybody that you or some of your assistants took the body of Booth out into the ocean, tied stones to it, and sunk it?

A. I do not know that I ever did directly. I have been questioned a great deal in reference to that matter, and used to reply to the reporters somewhat at random. Very likely I did make such a statement. I do not recollect.

Q. Why do you say very likely you did?

A. I say that because, at the time the body was disposed of, I was beset by correspondents and others who wanted to ascertain where it was buried. The Secretary did not want anybody to know.

Q. Is it a fact that the body was taken out into the ocean and sunk?

A. No, sir.\* \* \*

Q. Did you ever represent that you alone, with one other man, disposed of the body and that no other persons on earth knew where it was?

A. My previous answer applies to this question.

Q. You will answer this question if you please.

A. I might have made that representation.

Q. Is it true?

A. No, sir, it is not true. I have stated my reasons for making it.<sup>62</sup>

On May 20th, 1865, the widely read *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* carried a front-page engraving of the dime novel school: THE ASSASSIN'S END—FINAL DISPOSITION OF THE BODY OF JOHN WILKES BOOTH—AN AUTHENTIC SKETCH. Above this, in large type, was the following note:

The sketch below was furnished by one of the two officers employed in the duty of sinking the body of Booth in the middle of the Potomac. Although not authorized to divulge his name, I am able to vouch for the truth of the representation.

F. LESLIE.

New York, May 10th, 1865.

The picture shows two bearded gentlemen in army uniform (one of whom may perhaps be intended for Colonel Baker) engaged at dead of night in sliding over the gunwale of a dinghy what evidently is a sheeted figure lashed to a plank. Drawn by a staff artist, the scene, it is hardly necessary to say, was purely imaginative. Probably the details were supplied by Colonel

<sup>62</sup> The Colonel was nettled (not without reason) at certain questions, and his testimony assumed the nature of a verbal duel with his examiner.



Baker's office; at all events, if the Colonel wasn't romancing, Mr. Leslie (*né* Henry Carter) was.

Questioned before the House Judiciary Committee on May 18th, 1867, Secretary Stanton thus explained his procedure regarding the body:

Q. What was the occasion of mystery about his burial?

A. I do not know that there was any mystery about it other than this: I thought the body should be interred, so that if there was any disposition to do so, the body might not be made the subject of glorification by disloyal persons and those sympathizing with the rebellion. I thought it would be a source of irritation to the loyal people of the country if his body was permitted to be made the instrument of rejoicing at the sacrifice of Mr. Lincoln; and that it would help to keep up the feeling of excitement and animosity on the part of those who sympathized, if they did not participate, with him in the act of Mr. Lincoln's murder.

Q. There was nothing about the identity of Booth that entered into your consideration of making the burial a secret?

A. Nothing whatever. It was done simply and solely for the purpose of preventing him from being made the subject of rebel rejoicing.\* \* \*

Q. Was there any purpose in so burying the body of Booth that no history could ever give an account of the spot where he was buried?

A. None whatever. The only object was to place his body where it could not be made an improper use of until the excitement had passed away, and then, I supposed, at the proper time, it would be given to his friends.

Stanton's enemies—and they were many—were quick to fasten upon this incident as one more excuse for repeated bitter complaints against him. As late as 1869 the *New York World* declared that Booth had been interred "with a secrecy which smacked of the Inquisition" and charged that "But for Edwin M. Stanton the glamour of a factitious mystery would never have been thrown around the burial of the poor lifeless remains." . . . Waxing violent, it denounced the "malignant imbecility" of "this Pennsylvania lawyer, turned high priest of Moloch," who performed "mummeries" over a dead body.<sup>63</sup>

There were no mummeries, and the admittedly factitious mystery—to which journalistic paragraphs gave substantial aid—was

<sup>63</sup> Feb. 16; p. 1. Feb. 18; p. 4.

bound to develop; for something wrapped in an army blanket had emerged from the vast gloom of the river and shortly disappeared. The findings of the autopsy were disclosed in the curtest manner. Apparently feeling that Booth's deed had virtually thrown Washington back into a state of war, Colonel Baker executed his superior's orders and justified his hoaxing of troublesome reporters. After all, rumors were prevalent—in the Navy Yard and elsewhere it was alleged that a war vessel would "take the body to sea and consign it to oblivion."<sup>64</sup> At the same time it was being hinted that the capture of Booth *alive* ought to have been thoroughly possible; and the story was passed around that a man in woman's clothes *and using crutches* had been seen entering a house on Pennsylvania Avenue, between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets, and that the entire block had thereupon been searched—in vain!<sup>65</sup> It was even whispered that Colonel Baker and his associates were in a conspiracy to defraud, seeking to obtain reward-money for a corpse not Booth's. Myth was forming.

Down in southernmost Washington, where the Eastern Branch joined the Potomac, was a thumblike bulge of land called Greenleaf's Point. An earthwork was built here before the close of the eighteenth century, and by 1803 there was a small military post, which, with the addition of workshops, became in 1817 the Washington Arsenal. A Federal penitentiary of 160 cells was subsequently located at the northern end of the reservation, and the discipline of prisoners was carried on side by side with the manufacture of arms and ammunition. The Civil War made the arsenal an exceedingly busy place. Huge quantities of ordnance and small arms were stored there, and ammunition of all kinds was prepared. In 1862 the penitentiary building and grounds were transferred to the War Department's jurisdiction, the civil prisoners were removed to the penitentiary at Albany, New York, and the gloomy-looking brick structure was appropriated to military uses.<sup>66</sup>

It was to the former penitentiary building on the grounds of the Washington Arsenal that the body of John Booth was taken.

<sup>64</sup> James Croggon in the *Evening Star* (Washington), Jan. 5, 1907.

<sup>65</sup> New York *World*, Apr. 27; p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> W. J. O'Brien in *Army Ordnance*, July-Aug. 1935; pp. 32-35.

This was in accordance with the directions of Secretary Stanton, as the Secretary himself testified before the Judiciary Committee of the House in 1867.

Q. What was done with the body of Booth?

A. I did not see him interred. I gave directions that he should be interred on the premises of the Ordnance Department; and the officer to whom I gave directions reported that he was so interred.

Q. Did you give directions as to the particular manner in which he should be interred?

A. I gave directions that he should be interred in that place, and that the place should be kept under lock and key.

Watching from the *Montauk's* deck, Seaton Munroe followed the rowboat in its course down the Branch, saw it turn the point in the direction of the arsenal and disappear.

The boat drew up to a wharf on the Potomac side of the arsenal grounds and there the body was lifted out and placed in a summer house or arbor overlooking the water. Lieutenant Baker took charge while Colonel Baker went to find Col. J. G. Benton, the officer then in command of the arsenal post. Both Colonel Baker and Lieutenant Baker testified to having seen the body carried within the walls surrounding the penitentiary building.<sup>67</sup> Indiscriminate references to both "arsenal" and "penitentiary" have naturally led to some confusion, but the matter is made sufficiently clear in the following excerpt from Colonel Baker's testimony:

I call it the arsenal building, because it was used for arsenal stores. It was properly the old penitentiary, though it had not been used for a penitentiary for some time.

Four-and-a-half Street ran directly from the City Hall to the penitentiary's gate.

With the aid of a plan of the building, Stanton had given instructions as to where the body should be put. The offices of the penitentiary had been at its western end—the end toward the Potomac—and next to them was a large, brick-floored room, originally intended for the dining hall. After the War Department took over the premises, this room had been used as a depository for

<sup>67</sup> Before the Judiciary Committee of the House, Fortieth Congress, 1st session (1867).

fixed ammunition or other arsenal stores. In it—reputedly in its southern half—John Booth's first grave was dug. Enlisted men of the Ordnance Corps did the work under Benton's supervision.

Still in its wrapping, the body was enclosed in a musket case and laid without ceremony in the earth. Colonel Baker was at the penitentiary during the evening and Major Eckert, as Stanton's personal representative, was there too, though neither was actually present at the burial. Two witnesses were E. N. Stebbins, store-keeper of the arsenal, and Assistant Surgeon G. L. Porter, on duty at that post. (Young Porter was later on the staff of Gen. J. F. Hartranft, who had charge of the execution of the doomed four on a hot July day in the penitentiary yard.) Like Sir John Moore at Corunna, Booth was inhumed "at dead of night" by a "lantern dimly burning." The grave was filled up, the bricks were replaced, the heavy gate was locked, and Stebbins took the key. When Colonel Baker reported to Stanton that night, Stanton (Baker said), wished to know where the key was and Baker accordingly drove back for it and handed it over to the Secretary.<sup>68</sup>

Examined before the House Committee on the Judiciary (May 30th, 1867), Major Eckert testified: <sup>69</sup>

Q. Did you see the grave?

A. I did.

Q. In what room was the burial to take place?

A. In a large room in the arsenal building.

Q. Please describe that room.

A. The only description I can give of it is, that it is the largest room in the building . . . perhaps thirty feet square, and possibly more. I never was in it but twice. It is in the old penitentiary building.<sup>70</sup>

Stanton's testimony before the same committee was:

Q. Who were the officers that buried him?

A. The officer in charge, to whom I gave my directions, was Colonel Benton, of the Ordnance Bureau.

Q. Did he report to you?

<sup>68</sup> New York *Herald*, May 12, 1865. New York *Times*, Oct. 4, 1867; Feb. 9, 1869; Feb. 21, 1901. *Magazine of History*, Apr. 1921. Porter, "The Tragedy of the Nation" (typescript in the Library of Congress). Baker's testimony before the House Committee on the Judiciary. James Croggon in the *Washington Star*, Jan. 5, 1907.

<sup>69</sup> House Report; p. 679.

<sup>70</sup> Porter said "about 50 x 40."



A. He reported that he had buried him.

Q. Do you know who else besides Colonel Benton were employed?

A. He employed some persons in his department. I was not present and do not know who was present. He reported that he had acted in accordance with my orders.

Q. Was there anything buried with the body of Booth?

A. Nothing whatever, so far as I have any knowledge. Colonel Benton can tell.

John Booth was locked in seclusion. On May 4th the body of Abraham Lincoln, after "processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the night," was placed in a temporary vault in Oak Ridge Cemetery at Springfield. On John's birthday, May 10th, pursuant to executive order, a Military Commission of nine officers assembled in a courtroom specially fitted up for it in the northeast corner of the penitentiary's third story, and there it severally arraigned eight persons known as "the conspirators." The Commission on June 30th pronounced sentence upon the accused. Mrs. Mary Surratt, George A. Atzerodt, David E. Herold, and Lewis Paine were to be hanged by the neck until they were dead. Samuel Arnold, Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, and Michael O'Laughlin were to be imprisoned at hard labor for life; Edman Spangler was to be imprisoned at hard labor for six years.

On July 7th, under a flaming sun, the four condemned to death were executed together on a scaffold in the penitentiary yard and buried in a row at its foot. Spangler, O'Laughlin, Arnold, and Mudd were later sent to Fort Jefferson on what was ironically named Golden Key, one of ten coral islets known as the Dry Tortugas, sixty-three miles west of Key West—a domain of sand burrs, prickly pear, and sharks. Meanwhile, for the greater part of two days, May 23rd and 24th, a vast column of sunburnt Union troops, their standards draped with flowers, marched along Pennsylvania Avenue in grand review.

John H. Surratt, after remaining in hiding in Canada, went to England and thence to Rome, where, under the name John Watson, he enlisted in the Pontifical Zouaves. The Ford brothers were released from prison, and through the press, under date of May 27th, John T. Ford expressed his gratitude<sup>71</sup> to "very many

<sup>71</sup> *Clipper*, June 10, 1865.

kind and earnest friends for their unwavering confidence and generous tenders of service." It was said that he was bargaining with a Congregational society for the sale of his Washington theater, and that if the building were purchased for use as a church "few changes will be made in the interior arrangements, and the boxes will remain as they were on the evening of the great tragedy."<sup>72</sup> Subsequently it was reported that the Young Men's Christian Association had "obtained a formal refusal of the property" until July 1st but had met with small response to a public appeal for funds.<sup>73</sup>

Ford's price was \$100,000; and according to hearsay, he would reopen the theater on September 1st rather than sell for less. By July 6th he was announcing that "the theater soon will be open to the public," though with the assurance that "The private box occupied by our late lamented President will remain closed." A performance of "The Octoroon" was advertised for the evening of Monday, July 10th, but about seven o'clock Gen. G. W. Giles, commanding the provisional brigade of the Veteran Reserve Corps, called upon Proprietor Ford with an order from General Augur (commanding the Department of Washington) directing that the theater be immediately shut.<sup>74</sup> Notices reading CLOSED BY ORDER OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT were posted upon the building and patrons were turned away; the box-office having, it was said, no opportunity to return their money to those who had bought tickets in advance.

Ford's counsel, H. Winter Davis and William Schley, writing from Baltimore on July 18th, informed Secretary Stanton that they believed Mr. Ford clearly to be entitled to use the theater for theatrical purposes, as his business was a lawful one which he had been duly licensed to pursue. They suggested that if the property were not returned, they would be compelled to advise their client as to the suitable remedy. On the following day the Secretary replied that he had seized and now held the property by order of President Johnson; that the President's instructions were to retain it for the use of the Government; that Mr. Ford's right to in-

<sup>72</sup> *New York Times*, June 18, 1865.

<sup>73</sup> *Ib.*, July 3, 1865.

<sup>74</sup> *Commercial Advertiser* (New York), July 11, 1865; also *Baltimore American* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* of same date.

demnity was not disputed; and that there was "no objection to any advice you may be disposed to give him."<sup>75</sup>

From the first there had been strong general objection to Ford's scheme to resume performances. The New York *Times*<sup>76</sup> had editorially styled it "an outrage upon propriety." Threats of violent interference were heard in Washington. Ford had received this warning:

Washington, D. C.  
July 9th 1865

Mr. J. T. Ford:

Sir: You must not think of opening to morrow night—I can assure you that it will not be tolerated. You must dispose of the property in some other way—Take even fifty thousand for it, and build another and you will be generously supported—But do not attempt to open it again.

One of many determined to  
prevent it.<sup>77</sup>

The Albany *Evening Journal* of July 13th expressed a common opinion in saying in an editorial article that Stanton deserved the public's thanks. But Lincoln's former Attorney-General and Stanton's associate in the Cabinet, Edward Bates, at that time in retirement in Missouri, made this sardonic entry in his diary: <sup>78</sup>

I see by the papers, that the Sec of War has, by his simple fiat, prevented the opening of Fords Theatre—the scene of Prest. Lincoln's assassination.

After that, what may he not do? What is to hinder him from transferring estates from one man to another, annulling land titles and dissolving the tie of marriage?

And when Ford told him of Stanton's letter and the President's decision, another persistent diarist, Orville Browning (who shortly, however, became Johnson's Secretary of the Interior), grumbled: "Nothing could be more despotic, and yet in this *free* Country Mr Ford is utterly helpless, and without the means of redress."

With the understanding that it would be fully protected and

<sup>75</sup> John T. Ford Papers.

<sup>76</sup> June 18, 1865.

<sup>77</sup> John T. Ford Papers.

<sup>78</sup> Beale's ed., p. 491.

either restored to Ford or purchased for \$100,000, the theater was held under a lease running from July 8th, 1865, to June 30th, 1866, at a rental of \$1,500 a month.<sup>79</sup> Purchase which had been recommended to Congress by the Secretary of War, was then effected on Ford's terms, which some had regarded as considerably above the intrinsic value. These are the facts in the case. The notion that Ford's property was wrested from him by a trick and at the Government's appraisal is utterly erroneous.

There were Washingtonians who hoped that the building might be devoted to the use of a public lending-library. Endorsing this idea, the *Chronicle* remarked: <sup>80</sup>

The Congressional library is out of the way and is never open in the evening. Books cannot be borrowed thence except by the favor of some official. It is of little use to the citizens of Washington.

This proposal apparently met with no official response and the refitted theater became part of the office of the Surgeon-General, United States Army. In its new quarters were found for the Army Medical Museum, to whose catalogue of singular exhibits the three vertebræ of John Booth, with the fragment of his spinal cord, were duly added.

The news of the assassination had been kept from the wounded Seward, but on Sunday, April 16th, he asked to have his bed moved so that he could get a view over Lafayette Park, where the trees were coming into leaf. Beyond the park he caught sight of a flag at half-staff above the portico of the War Department's barracklike headquarters. After an interval he said to his attendant: "The President is dead!"—and to the attendant's faltering denial he answered:

"If he had been alive, he would have been the first to call on me; but he has not been here nor sent to ask how I am—and there is the flag!" And the tears began to fall.<sup>81</sup>

It was the 10th of July before he was reported to be well along toward recovery. Shock hastened the death of his invalid wife; but

<sup>79</sup> The original abstract (Lincoln Museum) of payments shows a total of \$17,661.29.

<sup>80</sup> Weekly ed., July 22, 1865.

<sup>81</sup> Carpenter, "Six Months at the White House"; pp. 291-292.



in 1867 the resilient Secretary, with his "head like a wise macaw" (as Henry Adams described him), was inducing a reluctant Congress to buy Alaska for \$7,200,000—a sum that would have been spent on but two or three days of the war during its final year.

On June 10th, 1867, John H. Surratt, under indictment as a party to Lincoln's murder, was brought to trial in the criminal court for the District of Columbia. For more than two years his life had been one of far-ranging adventure. It was on April 21st, 1866, that a certain Henri Beaumont de Ste. Marie, by birth a French-Canadian, had called at the United States legation in Rome to inform Minister Rufus King that Surratt, under the name John Watson, had enlisted in the 3rd company of Pontifical Zouaves and was then with it at Sezze. Ste. Marie declared he had known both Surratt and Weichmann in Maryland, and that Weichmann and he had been instructors together at St. Matthew's Institute in Washington. He said he had later entered the Union army as a substitute and been taken prisoner, and when released had gone to England, to Canada, and thence to Italy, where he had joined the 9th company of the Pontifical Zouaves.

Although there was no extradition treaty between the United States and the Vatican, it was granted that in a case so exceptional Zouave John Watson should be delivered up and forthwith he was arrested at Veroli, where he happened to be on leave. On November 8th, 1866, he broke away from his six guards and escaped by plunging into a ravine; on the 27th, still in his Zouave uniform, he was arrested at Alexandria, Egypt, by United States Consul Hale; and on December 21st, without objection by the Egyptian government, was turned over to Commander Jeffers of the *Swatara*, aboard which vessel he was conveyed back to his native land. His trial lasted from June 10th to August 11th, 1867, but the jury disagreed; four being for conviction, eight for acquittal. Arraigned for a second time, he was discharged by the court. Two Baltimoreans contributed generously toward his defense,<sup>82</sup> and he afterward made his home in Baltimore, where he was employed as auditor by the Old Bay Line (the Baltimore Steam Packet Company).

<sup>82</sup> Washington Post, Apr. 3, 1898.

Booth's memorandum book was not produced in evidence during the Conspiracy Trial. In February 1867 Col. Lafayette C. Baker (who meanwhile had retired from his wartime post) was summoned to testify before the House Committee on the Judiciary, which was busily gathering evidence looking toward impeachment of President Johnson.<sup>83</sup> On February 7th, upon examining the book, Colonel Baker testified that in his opinion it was not then in the condition in which it had been when Conger and he delivered it to Stanton on the afternoon of April 26th, 1865. Cards and slips of paper, bearing "names of persons in lower Maryland," were missing, he said, from the pocket at the back, and so was "a drawing of a house." Moreover, he believed that at one place sixteen or eighteen leaves had been cut out since the book was handed over to the Secretary. He admitted that he had had the book in his possession but "a very short time" and that his "recollection" was "quite indistinct."<sup>84</sup> The Judge Advocate General (Holt) told the Committee on April 2nd:

There was nothing in the diary which I could conceive would be testimony against any human being, or for any one except Booth himself, and he being dead, I did not offer it to the Commission. I will state that it has been in my possession ever since, and kept locked up at my residence almost invariably. It is now in precisely the same condition that it was when it came into my hands.

You observe this is an old diary, one which had evidently been a good deal used by him. I think it not unlikely that the missing leaves contained current entries in regard to his personal matters which he did not choose to have exposed, and that he had torn them out himself; or there is another theory which may possibly have been the correct one; they may have contained entries which compromised his friends and co-conspirators, and he for that reason tore them out.

*[Here he read the text of the diary.]*

That is all that is written in the diary, except some figures and letters, unintelligible to me, though it is probable they were memoranda intended to indicate where he was in his flight on certain days of the week and month.<sup>85</sup>

Lieut. Col. E. J. Conger, testifying on May 13th, said that he had seen the memorandum book that day and examined it

<sup>83</sup> Articles of impeachment were finally presented to the Senate in March 1868.

<sup>84</sup> House Report; pp. 32-33.

<sup>85</sup> *Ib.*; pp. 285-287.

closely. He thought it to be in the same general condition as it had been when delivered to Stanton. Aboard the steamer, when coming from Belle Plain to Washington on April 26th, 1865, he had had ample opportunity to inspect Booth's so-called diary—he had even made a copy of the text. A few leaves were missing then: "There were some out and I think the same." As far as he could see, the only difference was that a little bunch of shavings, taken from Booth at Garrett's, had been placed in the book.<sup>86</sup>

On May 14th, in reply to an executive order of the 9th, Stanton furnished to President Johnson an official copy of the text of the Booth diary, certified by Holt. In an accompanying letter, Stanton asserted that the book as delivered by Conger and Baker had been found to contain "only the entries certified by General Holt, also some photographs of females." The Secretary added:

Immediately preceding the entries some pages appeared to have been cut out, but there was nothing indicating what had been written thereon or whether anything had been written, nor when or by whom they had been cut out.

Holt's report, submitted with the copy of the diary, conjectured quite sensibly:

The "diary" purports to be one for 1864, and the leaves cut or torn from it probably contained entries of that year and were thus destroyed by Booth himself.<sup>87</sup>

To anyone who has studied this noted relic at first hand, it seems evident that a heavy knife lopped away the missing pages in one batch. It is likely that whatever they contained (if anything) was of a strictly personal nature, for the John Booth of 1865 had no discernible scruples about involving others in the consequences of his treasonable projects. Phrases of bygone dalliance remained among the new entries: *Ti amo, Siempre lo mismo, Toujours le même, Amo a ti*—as if the writer had been setting them down for use in his lighter correspondence. There was also a jury-rigged calendar in which Booth had roughly laid out the days, beginning with Monday, April 17th (after he had gained a refuge in the short pines) and running well into June.

<sup>86</sup> *Ib.*; pp. 323-325, 329. See also his testimony at the Surratt Trial.

<sup>87</sup> *Intelligencer*, May 21, 1867. Of the "females," four were actresses: Fay (Fanny) Brown, Effie Germon, Alice Grey, Helen Western.



Each day had been crossed out, from April 17th down to (and including) the 25th—before sunrise of the 26th the flight was ended.

The "diary" is not a diary in any proper sense; but the penciled lines, blurred in spots from much handling, form a remarkable human document. Here follows the authentic text, from a recension of the original.<sup>88</sup>

April 13—14 Friday the Ides

Until to day nothing was ever *thought* of sacrificing to our country's wrongs. For six months we had worked to capture. But our cause being almost lost, something decisive & great must be done. But its failure was owing to others, who did not strike for their country with a heart. I struck boldly and not as the papers say. I walked with a firm step through a thousand of his friends, was stopped but pushed on. A colonel was at his side. I shouted *Sic semper before* I fired. In jumping broke my leg. I passed all his pickets, rode sixty miles that night with the bone of my leg tearing the flesh at every jump. I can never repent it, though we hated to kill. Our country owed all her trouble to him, and God simply made me the instrument of his punishment. The country is not what it *was*. This forced union is not what I have loved. I care not what becomes of me. I have no desire to out-live my country. This night (before the deed), I wrote a long article and left it for one of the Editors of the National Intelligencer, in which I fully set forth our reasons for our proceedings. He or the Govmt

Friday 21

After being hunted like a dog through swamps, woods, and last night being chased by gun-boats till I was forced to return wet cold and starving, with every man's hand against me, I am here in despair. And why? For doing what Brutus was honored for. What made Tell a Hero. And yet I for striking down a greater tyrant than they ever knew am looked upon as a common cutthroat. My action was purer than either of theirs. One hoped to be great himself. The other had not only his country's but his own wrongs to avenge. I hoped for no gain. I knew no private wrong. I struck for my country and that alone. A country groaned beneath this tyranny and prayed for this end, and yet now behold the cold hand they extend to me. God cannot pardon me if I have done wrong. Yet I cannot see any wrong except in serving a degenerate people. The little, the very little I left behind to clear my name, the Govmt will not allow to be printed. So ends all. For my country I have given up all that makes life sweet and Holy, brought misery upon my family, and am sure there is no pardon in the Heaven

<sup>88</sup> In the office of the Judge Advocate General, Washington.



for me since man condemns me so. I have only *heard* what has been done (except what I did myself) and it fills me with horror. God try and forgive me, and bless my mother. To night I will once more try the river with the intent to cross, though I have a greater desire and almost a mind to return to Washington and in a measure clear my name, which I feel I can do. I do not repent the blow I struck. I may before my God but not to man.

I think I have done well, though I am abandoned, with the curse of Cain upon me. When if the world knew my heart, *that one* blow would have made me great, though I did desire no greatness.

To night I try to escape these blood hounds once more. Who, who can read his fate. God's will be done.

I have too great a soul to die like a criminal. Oh may he, may he spare me that and let me die bravely.

I bless the entire world. Have never hated or wronged anyone. This last was not a wrong, unless God deems it so. And it's with him to damn or bless me. And for this brave boy with me who often prays (yes, before and since) with a true and sincere heart, was it crime in him, if so why can he pray the same. I do not wish to shed a drop of blood, but I "must fight the course". 'Tis all that's left me.

This outpouring falls into two divisions, of which the first—apparently cut short by an unexplained interruption—remains incomplete. The date in either case signifies little. In the effort to preserve a dramatic connection with Shakespeare's Brutus and the fateful Ides of March, we have "April 13-14," the Ides of April being on the 13th of that month. It was not, of course until the 15th that "the papers" told of Booth's deed at all; and Booth had seen no newspapers until Jones brought some to him. Nor was Booth "chased by gun-boats" on Thursday, April 20th; for Jones explicitly says that "Wednesday and Thursday passed uneventfully," that he had not "visited the fugitives at night" until Friday, and that previous to Friday no attempt had been made to get Booth and Herold across the river.

For that matter, Booth on the night of April 14th-15th had ridden not sixty miles but only half that distance; and the bone of his leg could not have been "tearing the flesh," inasmuch as Doctor Mudd stated that "there was nothing resembling a compound fracture." Show has been made of reading a portentous meaning into the words "I have a greater desire and almost a mind to return to Washington and in a measure clear my name, which I feel I can do." Sagacious ones have insisted that he must have

thought to "clear his name" by unmasking accomplices of high degree. It was not deemed sufficient to view this remark, in the light of the whole tortured and overwrought avowal, as no more than the expression of a wild and momentary fancy. Such, nevertheless, it undoubtedly is. As we scan these jottings in their entirety, we may say of John Booth, as Goethe did of Hamlet, that "he winds, turns, agonizes, advances, and recoils." From the pitiable incoherence, these revealing sentences emerge:

*"Our country owed all her trouble to him, and God simply made me the instrument of his punishment."*

*"I hoped for no gain. I knew no private wrong. I struck for my country and that alone."*

In August 1867 President Johnson dismissed Stanton from office and appointed General Grant to be Secretary of War *ad interim* until the wishes of Congress might be learned. It was while Grant held tenure that Edwin Booth addressed to him this letter:

Barnum's Hotel  
Baltimore  
Sept 11th  
1867

Genl U. S. Grant

Sir:

Having once received a promise from Mr Stanton that the family of John Wilkes Booth should be permitted to obtain the body when sufficient time had elapsed, I yielded to the entreaties of my Mother and applied for it to the 'Secretary of War'—I fear too soon, for the letter was unheeded—if, indeed, it ever reached him.

I now appeal to you—on behalf of my heart-broken Mother—that she may receive the remains of her son.—

You, sir, can understand what a consolation it would be to an aged parent to have the privilege of visiting the grave of her child, and I feel assured that you will, even in the midst of your most pressing duties, feel a touch of sympathy for her—one of the greatest sufferers living.

May I not hope too that you will listen to our entreaties and send me some encouragement—some information how and when the remains may be obtained?

By so doing you will receive the gratitude of a most unhappy family, and will—I am sure—be justified by all right-thinking minds should the matter ever become known to others than ourselves.

I shall remain in Baltimore two weeks from the date of this letter—during which time I could send a trust-worthy person to bring hither and privately bury the remains in the family grounds, thus relieving my poor mother of much misery.

Apologizing for my intrusion, and anxiously awaiting a reply to this—

I am, sir, with great respect

Yr obt sert

Edwin Booth

Search made in the files of the War Department at the request of Herman H. Kohlsaatt, former editor of various newspapers in Chicago, failed to discover any reference to this appeal, which seemingly went as unheeded as did the letter to Stanton. By September 1867 it already had been decided to raze the central section of the old penitentiary building and improve the grounds. These changes made necessary the removal not only of Booth's body but also of five others. Those of Paine, Herold, Atzerodt, and Mrs. Surratt had been buried in the penitentiary yard with a fence around them and a wooden headboard marking each; and they had for neighbor that of Capt. Henry Wirz, one-time commandant of Camp Sumter, the Confederate military prison at Andersonville, Georgia. Brought to trial on August 21st, 1865, under charges of inhumanity toward Union prisoners, and found guilty on most of the counts, he was hanged at the Old Capitol on November 10th. (Wirz's partisans have represented him as "the victim of a misdirected popular clamor," and Wirz described himself as the tool of his superiors; but Confederate reports show that Andersonville must have justified the remark of Lieut. Col. D. T. Chandler, C.S.A.: "This beats anything I ever saw; it is, indeed, a hell on earth.")<sup>89</sup>

On October 1st, 1867, all the bodies were transferred to the arsenal's "warehouse 1," a building on the eastern side of the grounds and little used, and there, within a capacious room having stone pavement, heavy iron doors, and walls lined with pigeon-holes, they were ranged in a trench about eight feet wide and six deep. Booth was put at the right-hand end and, by order of the

<sup>89</sup> Official Records, II, vol. vii, (serial, 120); p. 759. See Chandler's report, *ib.*; pp. 546-550, and Chief Surgeon White's report, pp. 557-560.

War Department, wooden markers carried the respective names. After this burial, the warehouse was kept strictly closed.<sup>90</sup>

Andrew Johnson's vexed term was drawing to its end when Edwin Booth sent a third petition.

N Y February 10 1869

Andrew Johnson Esq  
President United States

Dear Sir—

May I not now ask your kind consideration of my poor Mother's request in relation to her son's remains?

The bearer of this (Mr John Weaver) is sexton of Christ Church, Baltimore, who will observe the strictest secrecy in this matter—and you may rest assured that none of my family desire its publicity.

Unable to visit Washington, I have deputed Mr Weaver—in whom I have the fullest confidence, and I beg that you will not delay in ordering the body to be given to his care. He will retain it (placing it in his vault) until such time as we can remove other members of our family to the Baltimore Cemetery, and thus prevent any special notice of it.

There is also (I am told) a trunk of his at the National Hotel—which I once applied for but was refused—it being under seal of the War Dept., it may contain relics of the poor misguided boy—which would be dear to his sorrowing Mother, and of no use to anyone. Your Excellency would greatly lessen the crushing weight of grief that is hurrying my Mother to the grave by giving immediate orders for the safe delivery of the remains of John Wilkes Booth to Mr Weaver, and gain the lasting gratitude of

Yr. obt. servt.

Edwin Booth

On February 3rd Edwin had launched in New York the new Booth's Theatre, the finest in the United States,<sup>91</sup> with a lavish production of "Romeo and Juliet," in which he appeared as Romeo, Mary McVicker (who in June became his wife) as Juliet, Edwin Adams as Mercutio. This ran until April 10th and was followed immediately by Othello. Years later the *Century Magazine* was authorized to correct<sup>92</sup> the frequent but unwarranted statement that Edwin Booth, in spite of his letter of February 10th,

<sup>90</sup> New York *Times*, Oct. 4, 30, 1867; Feb. 9, 10, 1869. New York *World*, Feb. 10, 14, 16, 1869. Washington *Star*, Jan. 5, 1907.

<sup>91</sup> At the southeast corner of Sixth Avenue and 23rd Street.

<sup>92</sup> Apr. 1909; p. 920.



accompanied Weaver. "After the tragedy," the *Century* said, "Edwin Booth never set foot in Washington" except when subpoenaed on behalf of the defendants in the Conspiracy Trial.

Christ Church (Protestant Episcopal) which the Booths had attended and of whose Sunday school John Booth was at one time a member, was at the southwest corner of Gay and Fayette Streets, and at 22 Fayette Street, near the church, was John H. Weaver's cabinetmaking and undertaking establishment. On Friday the 12th Weaver obtained an audience with President Johnson, and Johnson on the ensuing Monday issued this order to Gen. John M. Schofield, Secretary of War:

Executive Mansion,  
February 15th 1869

The Honorable the Secretary of War will cause to be delivered to Mr. John Weaver, Sexton of Christ Church, Baltimore, the remains of John Wilkes Booth, for the purposes mentioned in the within communication.

Andrew Johnson

The following order was in turn dispatched from the office of Gen. E. D. Townsend, Assistant Adjutant-General:

War Dept  
Feb'y 15, 1869

Bvt Maj Gen G. D. Ramsay,  
U. S. Army,  
Comdg Washington Arsenal  
City of Washington

Sir:

The President directs that the body of John Wilkes Booth, interred at the Washington Arsenal, be delivered to Mr John Weaver, Sexton of Christ-Church Baltimore, Md.—for the purpose of having it removed and properly interred.

Please report the execution of this order.

I am &c  
E D T  
A. A. G.

Weaver had sought the aid of Harvey and Marr, a local undertaking firm at 335 F Street, around the corner from what had been Ford's Theatre; and W. R. Speare, a youth in the firm's employ who later set up for himself as undertaker, was instructed to go to the arsenal that afternoon with a light furniture van.

About four o'clock he was joined by Weaver and R. F. Harvey, who drove to the grounds in a carriage, and Weaver then had a brief interview with Captain Phipps, officer of the day at the post. At "warehouse 1" the storekeeper opened the great iron doors and led the way into the high-ceilinged room that had served as burial vault. Two bodies, those of Mrs. Surratt and Davy Herold, already had been taken out and given to the claimants empowered to receive them; and in this protected spot there was an odor of earth freshly dug.

After a little spade work, men of the Ordnance Corps raised to the surface without difficulty the pine case at the right-hand end of the trench. It was but slightly decayed; and when the thick coating of soil had been dislodged, the name JOHN WILKES BOOTH in black-painted capitals was readily legible. All was in order, as the War Department had provided. Four soldiers carried the box to the van, and about six o'clock, as the streets of Washington filled with people bound homeward, the van drew up to Harvey and Marr's back door and stood in the very alley from which John Booth had dashed, that April night of 1865.<sup>93</sup>

The box was taken into Harvey and Marr's workshop by assistants, among whom was a volunteer, James Croggon, reporter for the *Star*. Harvey had said to Croggon: "Don't ask any questions, but be at our place at six o'clock this evening as one of my assistants, and you will get a good item."<sup>94</sup> Croggon was there, helped to lay the box on trestles, and watched as the body was identified for the third time. He saw Weaver lift the head and examine it—it still had the "fine suit of hair," distinctive as in life. He saw a man enter from the office and intently study the teeth, heard him announce with emphasis: "This is Wilkes Booth, for this is some of my work." It was a dentist from Baltimore, whose opinion had been sought in the case. The reporter also saw a high boot on one leg and on one a rough shoe which he mistakenly thought had been improvised by cutting away the other boot's long top. He understood that a brother of John's was in Harvey and Marr's

<sup>93</sup> *World* (New York), Feb. 9, 1869 (p. 1), Feb. 16, p. 1. *Sun* (New York), Feb. 17 (p. 1). *Intelligencer*, Feb. 16 (p. 3). *Washington Evening Star*, Jan. 5, 1907.

<sup>94</sup> Croggon (1835-1916) was active on the *Star* from 1862 to 1894, and wrote special articles until 1915.



*From a photograph in the Robinson Locke Collection, New York Public Library*

# A PART OF THE BOOTH LOT IN GREEN MOUNT AS IT FORMERLY APPEARED

(At the rear of the large monument may be seen one end of an ivy-covered mound, with a rosebush on it. Under that mound John Booth was buried)





front room. It was not Edwin, as he supposed, but "Doc" Booth, awaiting the reports of Weaver and the dentist.<sup>95</sup>

Shifted to a plain deal coffin, the body was conveyed to the train leaving Washington at seven-thirty and reaching Baltimore at nine. From the train it was removed to Weaver's on Fayette Street, and that night John T. Ford, who had been keeping general oversight of the matter, sent a telegram marked "Deliver to-night sure." It read (as delivered):

Balto Md Feb 15 1869

Edwin Booth

Booths Theatre N Y

Successful and in our possession here —

J T Ford

Edwin saved this message in his files, and on the reverse of the blank he penciled: "John's body."<sup>96</sup>

Next day General Ramsay forwarded this notice to General Townsend:

Washington Arsenal,  
Washington, D. C., Feby 16th  
[1869]

Maj. Gen. E. D. Townsend  
Asst. Adjt. General U. S. Army  
Washington D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to report that the body of John Wilkes Booth was, on Monday afternoon the 15th inst., delivered to the person designated in the order of the President of the United States of the same date.

I am, Sir,

Very respectfully  
Your Obdt. Servt.  
Geo D Ramsay  
Bvt. Maj. Gen. U. S.  
[Army]  
Commanding

Everything had been regular. At the Garrett farm and aboard the *Montauk* the body had been identified past doubt. While in

<sup>95</sup> *Star*, Jan. 5, 1907; pt. 3, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> From the original, by courtesy of The Players, New York.

the War Department's possession it had been carefully marked and thoroughly secured. The same body had now been given up without obstacle or evasion.<sup>97</sup>

The privacy Edwin Booth so much desired was quickly invaded. Early on Tuesday the 16th a crowd assembled in the vicinity of Weaver's and by afternoon hundreds of curious persons visited the place. Many were allowed to view the body. Souvenir hunters cut away pieces of blanket and locks of hair. Throughout the city, John Booth was a subject of general talk.<sup>98</sup> The Booth lot, where lay Richard and Junius Brutus the elder, was in the old Baltimore Cemetery, and the morning's *Sun* had informed Baltimoreans that John's remains would be deposited there. Hence, to the annoyance of cemetery officials, throngs flocked to Baltimore Cemetery all day long and streamed back again in disappointment. The body, in what the *Sun* described as "a handsome mahogany case, with hinged lid and glass plate,"<sup>99</sup> remained for two days in a back room at Weaver's and was identified with extraordinary conclusiveness.

On Wednesday the 17th a rehearsal was in full swing at the Holliday Street Theatre when Manager John T. Ford appeared. In an undertone he exchanged a few words with Charles B. Bishop, at that time a member of the company. (Bishop, a well-liked comedian, was also a good friend of Edwin Booth's.) Then he turned to Blanche Chapman, saying: "Blanche, I want you to keep your eyes and ears open but your mouth shut." With Bishop he marshaled Miss Chapman and her sister Ella out of the stage entrance, and the four crossed the street to Weaver's undertaking rooms. They passed through the front room into a smaller one at the back, and among those gathered there Blanche at once recognized the grief-stricken Mary Ann Booth and Rosalie, John's older sister, with both of whom she had become well acquainted in New York. Dr. J. A. Booth, too, was in the group, and John H. Weaver, and Harry Ford, whom Blanche was later to marry though as yet she was not engaged.

She next was aware of what seemed the focus of interest—a

<sup>97</sup> All the other bodies were released from the custody of the War Department and interred in various Washington graveyards.

<sup>98</sup> *New York Times*, Feb. 17, 1869; p. 1. *Baltimore Sun*, June 4, 1903; p. 12.

<sup>99</sup> Feb. 17th; p. 1.

coffined body. The lips had receded, making conspicuous a fine set of teeth; and the head, with its parchmentlike skin, was topped by an abundance of jet-black, wavy hair. Weaver had a chart showing the work done by the Baltimore dentist, and this he handed to "Doc" Booth, who passed it to Bishop. Bishop carefully drew out a tooth that newspapers afterward referred to as "peculiarly plugged"—the filling being characteristic enough to be regarded as evidential. ("Doc" Booth knew of it through the dentist's report at Harvey and Marr's, if not before.) After that, the left leg was inspected. Bishop unwrapped what Miss Chapman judged was a bandage; she noticed the shoe on that foot; and the men all gazed at the injured leg and were satisfied.

At Weaver's request, Blanche, with scissors he provided, cut from the brow a generous lock of hair. Mary Ann Booth took it, gave a strand to Blanche, another to Ella. Blanche had not known John Booth, but Harry Ford, who had been his friend, told Blanche that in its contours and features the head was unmistakably John's—that additional proof had really been unnecessary. The Booths were convinced; so was John T. Ford, who (as he said) had known John "since childhood" and was not likely to be deceived.<sup>100</sup>

During the two days, February 16th and 17th, many others identified the body. Among these was Norval E. Foard (1837-1906), a newspaperman who had joined the staff of the Baltimore *Sun* in 1865, who for many years was state editor of that paper, and whose knowledge of Maryland affairs was considered "truly remarkable."<sup>101</sup> He visited Weaver's in company with John T. Ford, Maj. Thomas W. Hall, also of the *Sun*, and John W. McCoy, a local businessman. The detached head, Foard said, was passed around and looked upon<sup>102</sup>—in somewhat the fashion that John, as Hamlet, might have looked upon Yorick's skull. McCoy, Hall, and Foard saw the matted black hair, the teeth; they listened as John T. Ford called attention to the firm outline of the lower jaw that still "bore resemblance to the living man." They scanned the high boot on one leg, the shoe like "an army brogan" on the foot

<sup>100</sup> Interview of the present writer with Blanche Chapman at Rutherford, New Jersey, in 1938.

<sup>101</sup> G. W. Johnson (and others), "The Sunpapers of Baltimore"; pp. 220-221.

<sup>102</sup> Baltimore *Sun*, June 4, 1903; p. 12.

of the other. They agreed with John T. Ford that there could be no reasonable doubt as to the body's genuineness.

So did two young men of Baltimore who had known John Booth from the days when they had been fellow-actors with him in juvenile theatricals of which he was a leading spirit. They were Dr. Theodore Micheau and Henry W. Mears. Mears, who lived until December 22nd, 1938, always protested that the identity of the body at Weaver's was beyond suspicion. He said that Basil ("Bas") Moxley, doorkeeper at the Holliday Street Theatre (later, for many years, at Ford's Opera House), who viewed the body when Mears himself did, raised no question whatever at that time.<sup>103</sup> Moxley also told the Fords that he was confident the body was John's.

It was not until the spring of 1903, after the press had for weeks been agog with stories of how Booth (under the name of David E. George) had committed suicide in Oklahoma, that Moxley, then nearly eighty years of age and rather crotchety, made in the Baltimore *American* what that paper termed a "remarkable disclosure."<sup>104</sup> The "disclosure" was remarkable in more ways than one.

"You can search all records in Washington," Moxley asserted, "or interview any officials then in office who are now alive and I will wager you will be unable to learn of any reward being paid out for the delivery of John Wilkes Booth's body to the government." This was false, and Moxley would have lost his bet. He told a rambling yarn to the effect that he had been present at a meeting between Edwin Booth and a private detective, when the detective showed Edwin "four letters, all of which were from reliable persons living in Maryland and Virginia, assuring the actor that his brother was not dead." Also he mentioned "several rumors to the effect that John had been seen at the crossroads near Pen-Mar,"<sup>105</sup> and told of having "heard men say that they had drunk with him in that locality."

He was now saying that the body had red hair, was "not that of the assassin but that of another man forwarded to Baltimore by

<sup>103</sup> From Mears' statement for the present writer.

<sup>104</sup> June 3, 6.

<sup>105</sup> In Franklin County, Pennsylvania, on the Maryland border.



the Government.”<sup>106</sup> Whereat Norval E. Foard gave it as his opinion that “if Mr. Moxley saw the remains in the Weaver shop and says the hair was red he is color blind.”<sup>107</sup>

Joseph T. Lowry, a Baltimore photographer, informed the special correspondent of the *Boston Herald*:

I was in the undertaking establishment of Mr. Weaver when the body of Booth was received from Washington. I had seen Booth play 20 times at the Holliday Street Theatre and knew him well by sight. There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that the face of the dead man I looked upon was that of the actor, whom I had seen many times in life. The features were the same, although considerably sunken. His dark hair, which was remarkably thick and curly, was well preserved.<sup>108</sup>

Col. William M. Pegram, who had known John Booth for years, viewed the body on the morning of February 16th. In a paper read at the Maryland Historical Society's meeting on October 13th, 1913,<sup>109</sup> Colonel Pegram referred to the “cavalry boot” on the right leg and the shoe on the opposite foot—he called it a “manufactured” shoe because he presumed, as did Croggon at Harvey and Marr's in Washington, that it had been extemporized from the left boot. (We know, of course, that the left boot, marked “J. Wilkes——” on its inner facing of white calfskin, had been discovered at Mudd's, intact except for the slit the Doctor had cut in removing it.) Pegram furthermore alluded to “the splendid teeth” and the heavy growth of coal-black hair. His impression was, as he elsewhere phrased it, that “Everything about the remains told of the man,”<sup>110</sup> and this was attested by Henry C. Wagner, also of Baltimore, who had gone with Pegram to Weaver's that day.

On the morning of Thursday, February 13th, the body was quietly placed in a vault in Green Mount Cemetery—a vault be-

<sup>106</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, Mar. 13, 1906.

<sup>107</sup> *Ib.*, June 4, 1903; p. 12. Faded black hair tends to take on a reddish cast. (“Since the color of hair is a compound color,” said Dr. Clark Wissler of the American Museum of Natural History in a letter to the present writer, “I suppose this means that the red in the original color fades last.”) Any ruddy tinge, after a period of years, would thus be accounted for in authentic specimens of John Booth's hair.

<sup>108</sup> Correspondence dated Mar. 7, 1903 (John T. Ford Papers).

<sup>109</sup> Printed in the *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Dec. 1913; pp. 327-331.

<sup>110</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, June 5, 1903.

longing to John H. Weaver and used as a depository by him and other local undertakers, a charge of \$2.00 a month or fraction thereof being made in each instance. On this occasion no one was present but Weaver and his assistants. The vault was not a large one, and the coffins in it were piled one upon another. Finally given up, sealed, and covered with earth, it merged into the grassy hillside. It was there, as the stub of Weaver's own record book manifests, that John's body was lodged until the fuss was over and Edwin's plans could be realized.<sup>111</sup>

Executive pardon already had been granted to Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, and on March 2nd President Johnson signed the pardons of Samuel Arnold and Edman Spangler.<sup>112</sup> Mudd, released from Fort Jefferson on March 8th, arrived at Key West on the 12th, and got back to his home on the 20th.<sup>113</sup> Spangler and Arnold reached Baltimore on April 6th.<sup>114</sup> Michael O'Laughlin did not return—he had died in Fort Jefferson on September 23rd, 1867, during an epidemic of yellow fever. On June 17th, 1869, Miss Anna E. Surratt was married in Washington to William Tonry, a chemist in the office of the Surgeon-General. "The bride," the *Baltimore Sun* reported,<sup>115</sup> "was attended by her brother Isaac, while John H. Surratt occupied a pew in front of the altar." That same day the body of Junius Brutus Booth the elder was transferred from the Baltimore Cemetery to Green Mount and there buried in newly acquired ground (a certificate of ownership made out to Mary Ann Booth was dated June 13th). The body of Richard Booth also was reburied in Green Mount, and presumably at the same time. According to the *Sun*,<sup>116</sup> John's body was to follow "during the latter part of next week." Junius' monument was brought from the old cemetery.

The committal service for John was held on the afternoon of Saturday, June 26th. "At the especial request of the family," in

<sup>111</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 19, 1869; p. 1. Statements of David W. Jenkins, funeral director, Baltimore, for the present writer.

<sup>112</sup> *New York Times*, Mar. 4.

<sup>113</sup> "Life"; pp. 318-320.

<sup>114</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, Apr. 7.

<sup>115</sup> June 18.

<sup>116</sup> June 19; p. 1.

the words of the *Sun's* account,<sup>117</sup> the body was carried from the vault by pallbearers chosen from "members of the theatrical profession" who had known the deceased. "Among these was Mr. Gallagher, who, it is stated, is the only surviving pallbearer of those who assisted at the burial of Junius Brutus Booth, nearly seventeen years ago." The *Sun* continued:

About forty or fifty persons were assembled at the grave, including relatives and friends of the family, the larger portion being ladies. . . . The Rev. Fleming James, assistant minister at St. Luke's Hospital, New York, robed in gown and surplice, officiated, standing at the head of the grave and reading the simple and beautiful service of the dead according to the ritual of the Protestant Episcopal Church. . . . The family seemed to feel keenly the grief of the occasion, and had the heart-felt sympathy of those present.<sup>118</sup>

Mary Ann Booth was there, with Rosalie, Edwin, and Junius. Asia had departed with her husband to England, where she was to end her days. Norval E. Foard was present and saw the burial in a grave at the rear of the elder Booth's obelisk. "There was no question of the fact then," said Foard in 1903, "nor is there any room for doubt now that the remains . . . buried in Greenmount Cemetery under the conditions I have described were those of John Wilkes Booth."<sup>119</sup> The stub from the record book of John H. Weaver (who knew John Booth and helped to identify the body) has this straightforward entry:<sup>120</sup>

No. 560

Baltimore, Feby 18<sup>th</sup>, 1869

Body of J Wilks Booth

Taken out June 26<sup>th</sup> 1869

Aged 27 years

\$8.00

Paid

*Disease*

<sup>117</sup> June 28; p. 1.

<sup>118</sup> See also the *New York Times*, June 28; p. 1, and *New York Commercial Advertiser* or *Sun* of that date.

<sup>119</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, June 4, 1903; p. 12. Henry W. Mears, who directed a number of burials in the lot, confirmed the statement as to John's grave.

<sup>120</sup> In a fragment of the book, among the Nolen Lincolniana of the Harvard College Library.

The dust of three infant children (Frederick, Elizabeth, Mary Ann), recently disinterred at the Belair farm, was lowered in one small coffin into the grave with John. Their names were cut below his on the white shaft; and Henry Byron's name was placed there, too, although he had been buried at Pentonville in England.<sup>121</sup> The *Sun* found the new burial-place to be in a very "eligible" spot, "in the vale near the spring, to the right of the chapel, and within easy access of one of the main drives."

John Booth when living had brought trouble to many, and now this service in Green Mount, as Norval Foard remarked, "brought trouble to the minister." The Rev. Fleming James had been admitted to deacon's orders in Virginia in 1868, and in 1869 was assistant to the Rev. William A. Muhlenberg, superintendent and pastor of St. Luke's Hospital in New York.<sup>122</sup> At the time of the Booth obsequies, he had been visiting his friend the Rev. Thomas U. Dudley, rector of Christ Church. Upon his return to New York, he learned that officials of the hospital were (to quote Foard) "shocked that he gave Christian burial to the assassin of the President." The following open letter from the Rev. Mr. James appeared in the New York *Times*:<sup>123</sup>

#### A CARD.

Finding that my officiating at the reinterment of the remains of J. Wilkes Booth, as reported in the public prints, has given great offence to the authorities and others of St. Luke's Hospital, in which I have been assistant to the pastor, I beg publicly to offer a few words of explanation.

I happened to be in Baltimore, and was at the house of a brother clergyman, when he was suddenly called upon to read the burial service on the above-named occasion. As he was just going out of town, he requested me to do it for him. I consented, having but a few moments for reflection, and seeing no good reason for refusing. Had I imagined that my action would have been followed by such unpleasant consequences here, I should have felt bound to consult my duty to the hospital rather than to a strange parish. I regret I did not foresee this, and

<sup>121</sup> This presumably is why the Green Mount records have "six bodies" instead of five, as removed from elsewhere.

<sup>122</sup> Spokesmen for the hospital and for the registrar's office of the Diocese of New York informed the present writer that their files contained no reference to James.

<sup>123</sup> July 2; p. 5.



will only add that my Southern feelings had nothing to do with the matter. I acted wholly from a sense of duty at the time. I need scarcely say that I have no sympathy with the assassination of which the deceased was guilty.

I leave the hospital with the best wishes for its continued prosperity, and with the satisfaction of knowing, as the venerable pastor allows me to say, that my services have been acceptable, and that I enjoyed the affectionate esteem of the household.

(Signed,) FLEMING JAMES.

New-York, June 30, 1869.

Forced to resign his post in New York, the Rev. Mr. James was for a time assistant to the Rev. A. M. Randolph at Emmanuel Church in Baltimore, and later was chosen rector of St. Mark's, to succeed the Rev. H. H. Hewitt. He brought letters dismissory from Virginia, where he had been admitted to priest's orders. Subsequently he held professorships in theological schools at Gambier, Ohio, and in Philadelphia.<sup>124</sup> It is gratifying to know that this liberal and honest young minister's career of usefulness was not seriously interrupted by an episode in which he figured to such advantage. Note should also be made of the fact that the Episcopal service had been read over the body of David E. Herold in Washington on February 15th by the Rev. J. Vaughn Lewis of St. John's Church, often styled "the President's church" because many a President had worshiped there.

We should naturally assume that the Fords could not have been imposed upon, that John T. Ford would not have attempted to delude his friend Edwin Booth, and that Fords and Booths would not have been parties to a mock burial. Knowing also that John Booth's corpse had been identified four several times and with an uncommon thoroughness for which some evidence already has been offered in these pages, we may justly conclude that no basis exists in fact for the persistent story that the interment in Green Mount on June 26th, 1869, "was not that of the assassin, but that of another man forwarded to Baltimore by the Government."

In his later years, when living on a farm near Fairhaven in Anne

<sup>124</sup> Journals of the Council in Virginia and of the Maryland Convention (Protestant Episcopal Church). Statement of Dr. Fleming James, New Haven, for the present writer. *Baltimore Sun*, June 5, 1903; p. 7.

Arundel County (Maryland), Samuel Arnold stated he knew positively that John's body rested in Green Mount.<sup>125</sup> Though Arnold had not reached home until April 6th, 1869, members of his family and of O'Laughlin's presumably had viewed the body as it lay in Weaver's back room from the evening of February 15th until the morning of the 18th; and both families had known John Booth. From a highly trustworthy private source the present writer has learned that Dr. J. A. Booth "on several occasions" declared that the body in Green Mount was without question his brother's.

Henry W. Mears, who afterward, as a funeral director, occupied the premises that Weaver had used and who vigorously scouted the notion that the body might have been fraudulent, gave a clue<sup>126</sup> as to how gossip in Baltimore may have borne a part in spreading that notion. A few men, some of whom had been officers in the Confederate service, expressed distrust; partly, it may be, from the circumstance that the body, as delivered in Baltimore, was enveloped in an army blanket and wore on one foot a coarse shoe described as an army brogan; partly, we may assume, because they were not unwilling to bring reproach upon a Yankee War Department. At the North there had been grisly talk of Union soldiers' bones crushed to make fertilizer for the South, of their skulls wrought into drinking cups and displayed as trophies; and Southerners had told gruesome anecdotes of contractors utilizing skeletons of mules to fill out shipments of coffins sent to Northern communities by the authorities in Washington. Why suppose that those authorities would be punctilious about the body of Lincoln's murderer?

From time to time the stubborn myth received fresh accretions. Thus John Parshall (who died in Indianapolis in 1897) confided that he was one of six to whom the final disposition of the body had been entrusted. He was the last of the band, he said; and like the others he passed on and kept the mystery unrevealed.<sup>127</sup> A Capt. E. W. Hillard of Metropolis, Illinois, alleged that he was one of four privates who carried the remains from the Old Capitol prison to a gunboat that conveyed them about ten

<sup>125</sup> Baltimore correspondence of the *Boston Herald*, dated Mar. 7, 1903 (John T. Ford Papers).

<sup>126</sup> In his statement for the present writer.

<sup>127</sup> *New York Times*, Mar. 18, 1897.

miles down the Potomac, where they were sunk. Captain Hillard's romancing stirred Henry W. Mears to emphatic denial.<sup>128</sup>

Another military gentleman, Col. James H. Davidson of Chicago, termed chief of the 122nd Infantry during the Civil War, said he was in command at Portsmouth, Virginia, when a report was brought to him about "a group of men" behaving strangely during the night "around one of the warehouses." Next morning Col. L. C. Baker sought an interview with him.

"Last night," Baker informed him, "I brought into Portsmouth the body of Booth. Six of my men carried it on a stretcher to the first warehouse to the north. We took it into the basement, where we dug a grave. The body was placed in there and covered with acid. Then the grave was filled with limestone and dirt. Every man of us is pledged to secrecy. Will you promise never to say a word?"

"That," Colonel Davidson reflected, "was sixty years ago. There can't be any harm in telling it now. The country ought to know."<sup>129</sup>

In volubility these all were outdone by Edwin H. Sampson of Moline, Illinois. Sampson recited that he was one of four guards—Colonel Baker's men—protecting Lincoln at Ford's Theatre on the night of April 14th. (Lincoln "sat in a box and we went into the parquet.") He was also at Garrett's, where Booth was killed by a volley fired into the barn as ordered by Colonel Baker. He continued:

On the night of April 24[?] the Secretary of War told Col. Baker to take one man and dispose of the body between daylight and dark. Col. Baker ordered me to go with him. Between the hours of 1 and 3 Col. Baker and I disposed of the remains of John Wilkes Booth. We left in darkness and returned in darkness. I can swear that no other man knows where we went. And I can swear that no man ever will know. I have kept the secret and I will die with it in my heart.<sup>130</sup>

It was said that Sampson (who claimed to have been a sergeant in the First United States Cavalry) once gave at Rock Island an address in which he declared that he alone knew where John Booth's grave was. One Houston Booth of Galesburg (who main-

<sup>128</sup> *New York Sun*, Jan. 13, 1903.

<sup>129</sup> *Herald Tribune* (New York), Feb. 22, 1922.

<sup>130</sup> *New York World*, Mar. 8, 1925.



tained he was a cousin of John's) subsequently disputed this and announced his positive knowledge that John, having outwitted his pursuers, escaped to Oklahoma, and there died of old age.

The obvious impossibility of reconciling any two of these various accounts by no means discouraged the myth-fanciers, who rallied around the time-worn adage concerning smoke and fire. The fire in this case was not the flame of truth. Minor fictions, however inconsistent, were welcomed—such as that of a midnight burial in Green Mount. According to one version,<sup>131</sup> the body did not arrive in Baltimore until noon of February 17th, 1869; was taken from Weavers' the next evening at exactly eleven-forty-five; and was buried in Green Mount at "the very witching time of night." Oddly enough, the centennial book issued by the proprietors of Green Mount has it that the removal from Washington and the interment in Green Mount were "accomplished secretly." So far as Baltimore was concerned, the removal turned out to be, as we have seen, a rather public affair. As for the interment, the Baltimore *Sun* on Saturday, June 19th, 1869, proclaimed that "the body of J. Wilkes Booth will be buried during the latter part of next week" (it was buried on the afternoon of Saturday, the 26th), and on Monday the 28th reported the interment at considerable length, noting that about "forty or fifty persons were assembled." The rites were hardly clandestine, to say the least.

The story of burial by proxy is of a more or less stereotyped and familiar pattern. Rumors had started in much the same way in 1825 as to Alexander the First of Russia. It was said he had not died in that year at Taganrog in the Crimea; that a soldier who resembled him and conveniently had just died was placed in the Tsar's coffin (or, as another version ran, one of the monarch's couriers was killed for the purpose); and that a hermit who lived at Tomsk in Siberia and died there as late as 1864 was really the Emperor. So, too, years later, rumors were current that the body laid away in the gloomy Habsburg crypt in 1889 was not the Archduke Rudolf's.

When the Rev. Fleming James read the committal service for John Booth on that summer day of 1869, the beautiful little

<sup>131</sup> New York *Times*, Feb. 26, 1911.



Gothic mortuary chapel, with its pinnacles, topped the hill from which those acres derived their name; but the city had not yet encroached on the place, and at that distance the city's voices were faint. As years passed, men and women of distinction were received at Green Mount—Elizabeth Patterson, wedded in 1803 to Jérôme Bonaparte, whom his brother Napoleon made the puppet king of a counterfeit realm; Harriet Johnston, who as Harriet Lane had queened it at the President's House in the term of her uncle, James Buchanan; Sidney Lanier, who had fought for the South but whose poetry won national recognition; John McDonogh, who planned to free slaves; John E. Owens, the favorite comedian, immensely popular as Solon Shingle in J. S. Jones' "The People's Lawyer"; Gen. J. E. Johnston of the Confederate army, who put his name to final articles of surrender on the day when John Booth was killed. But it may truly be said that no other spot within these boundaries has ever held such general interest as has that known officially as "lots 9 and 10, 'Dogwood' area."

Henry Mears, after he had taken charge of it, once discussed with Edwin Booth some proposed changes.

At length, "How about John's grave?" asked John's former playmate and friend.

"Leave that as it is," was Edwin's answer.

So it was left, with no headstone or "marker" to denote the exact spot. Only in that sense, however, was the grave "unmarked." Col. Frank Burr, writing in the Philadelphia *Inquirer* in 1881,<sup>132</sup> referred not only to an ivy-covered mound where the elder Booth lay but also to "a second ivy-covered mound," with a rosebush on it, at the rear of the monument. (Richard Booth's grave had a flat slab of its own.) As late as 1889,<sup>133</sup> this mound would appear to have been there. At some time after that the ivy disappeared and the ground was leveled.

The interment of John Booth was without trickery or stealth, but no barriers of evidence, no limits of reason ever halted the Great American Myth. It has often enough been whispered that

<sup>132</sup> Dec. 4; p. 1.

<sup>133</sup> By that time, the graves of Asia and Rosalie, each with an ivied mound, were in the lot. Mary Ann Booth (d. 1885) was placed in the same grave as her husband.

in the mausoleum at Springfield the coffin of Abraham Lincoln is empty.

Among the records of the War Department is a statement by Junius Booth in April 1865, containing these words:

Saw his brother in Washington in February last and was told by him that he had played there one night, in borrowed clothes,<sup>134</sup> having previously shipped his Theatrical Wardrobe to the South, while in Canada, and had otherwise disposed of much of his property, intending in the future, to reside and play in the South: but the vessel containing his property having been sunk by a gun boat, had changed his purpose, and induced him to devote his attention to the Oil business, in which he expected to be quite successful.

It had indeed been thought that the schooner in which the wardrobe was shipped to Nassau had been sunk by a Federal cruiser;<sup>135</sup> but on June 6th the *Quebec Mercury* printed an item to the effect that by virtue of a commission of inspection obtained from the Vice-Admiralty Court on behalf of the United States consul at Quebec, three trunks had been brought to Quebec from below Bic. They were John Booth's trunks, which during the previous fall had been shipped from Montreal for Nassau and were destined for Richmond. The schooner had, however, been wrecked, the account said; and the trunks had been taken to Bic by the salvors. What has been described as an extensive and costly theatrical wardrobe was found to have been almost completely ruined by salt water. Besides the wardrobe, there were also letters and papers of John's.<sup>136</sup>

Garrie Davidson, Edwin Booth's personal attendant at Booth's Theatre, once told Otis Skinner how after a performance early in 1873 Edwin had asked to be wakened at three the next morning and then had gone up to his rooms over the stage. At three, Edwin and Garrie descended to the furnace room, where stood a large trunk, "like a packing case." In this were costumes of John's—musty but still handsome: a robe for Othello, wrought of two East Indian shawls so fine they could have been drawn through a

<sup>134</sup> This was on Jan. 20, 1865, when he played Romeo at Avonia Jones' benefit at Grover's.

<sup>135</sup> *Daily News* (New York), Apr. 27, 1865; p. 5.

<sup>136</sup> See the *New York Herald*, June 10, 1865.

bracelet; an American Indian outfit, with a photograph of John wearing it—the picture dated Richmond 1859-1860 (“I guess that was Metamora,” said Garrie); and many others—and there were daggers, swords, wigs, and a pair of lady’s satin dancing slippers. Every article was thrust into the furnace, while Edwin watched; then the trunk itself was burned.<sup>137</sup>

Writing of this holocaust, Skinner called it “The Last of John Wilkes Booth”—but it was hardly that, even in a material sense. Many things that belonged to John Booth are still in existence; and his strange, disordered spirit lives on with the spirit of Abraham Lincoln.

<sup>137</sup> *American Magazine*, Nov. 1908; pp. 73-77.

## Twelve . . FALSE COLORS AND SHAPES

### 1.

HAD there been no Garrett's, no flame in the night, no mooted bullet, no guarded burial, yet a survival tale of some kind there doubtless would have been, since Booth returned to Washington City as a bedraggled corpse fetched by silent men out of the darkness that hid the long reaches of the Potomac.

In the New York *Times* of January 12th, 1867, a letter from James E. Campbell gave some color to the rumor that it was not Booth's corpse that was brought up the Potomac in the night. In a Calcutta hotel, six months before, Campbell (so he wrote) had heard a Bostonian arguing with a Southerner, who declared: "I will lay a wager of five hundred pounds that John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated President Lincoln, is alive and in good health at the present time; and agree to furnish proof of it within six months." Campbell was informed that the Southerner was Lieut. William Martin Tolbert of the *Shenandoah*, a Confederate privateer which had ranged the South Pacific.<sup>1</sup>

Campbell's narrative was reprinted in other American journals. Tolbert, it was said, had learned that Booth was in hiding in Ceylon. Apparently no effort was made to verify the story.<sup>2</sup> No Tolbert is in the "Register of Officers of the Confederate States Navy"; nor in the full descriptive list of the *Shenandoah's* officers, sent from England to the American press.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Jan. 12, 1867; p. 8. The letter was dated Jan. 10 at New York.

<sup>2</sup> See Izola Forrester's "This One Mad Act."

<sup>3</sup> The *Register* was compiled by the Office of Naval Records and the Library of the Navy Department; revised ed., 1931.—The descriptive list is in the New York *Herald*, Nov. 21, 1865; p. 5.



In a few months the *World* of New York was saying<sup>4</sup> that Booth "like that phantom ship, the Flying Dutchman, is from time to time, reported to have been seen *in propria persona* in various parts of the world; the latest story being that he is now the captain of a pirate vessel and the terror of the China seas. At intervals the press informs the public that some reliable correspondents have seen the notorious assassin in Europe. One time he has been seen playing *rouge et noir* at Baden Baden; another at the opera in Vienna. One positively swears that he saw him driving in the Bois de Boulogne at Paris. And another is equally confident that he beheld him visiting St. Peter's at Rome."

Much more detailed was the story that appeared in the *Missouri Republican* of St. Louis for September 7th, 1873. It was an interview with Carroll Jackson Donelson, an old sailor claiming to be "a blood relative of Andrew Jackson Donelson, who died recently in Memphis."<sup>5</sup>

After service in the Confederate army, C. J. Donelson had shipped, he said, as first mate out of San Francisco for Shanghai. On reaching the Pelew Islands "near the tenth parallel,"<sup>6</sup> he and a boat's crew went ashore in search of water and discovered six white persons, five men and a woman. "The first one that advanced toward me and held out his hand," said Donelson, "was John Wilkes Booth. There was no mistaking his identity as I had been an intimate friend of his in Montgomery, Ala., years before."

Donelson promised not to tell "for a period of one year" that he had seen Booth. Of his own party, Booth said, none knew who he was save the "female." "And she is my wife." For thirty days after the murder he had been in Washington City; but he did not say where he had hidden or how he got out of the country. His extensive wanderings had led him to Mexico, South America, Africa, Turkey, Arabia, Italy, and China. At Rome he met John H. Surratt. In China, under the command of Frederick Ward, who organized an imperial army against the Taiping rebels, he had fought with such distinction as to gain the favor of the emperor himself.

<sup>4</sup> Aug. 17, 1867; p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> A. J. Donelson died on June 26, 1871.

<sup>6</sup> The eighth parallel intersects the Pelews.

In Shanghai he joined a group of English and American residents and naval officers in an amateur dramatics club. Playing the title rôle in "Richard III," he stirred such enthusiasm that at the clash between Richard and Richmond in the final scene of the last act the audience burst into frantic applause. High above the din sounded cries of "Booth! Booth!" Sword in air, John turned to "glare like a tiger" at the house, and the curtain was quickly rung down.

Next day Ward put at Booth's disposal a lorch and crew, and invited him to be gone. He had headed for the Carolines but put in at the Pelews under stress of weather. Some time afterward, Donelson heard that the lorch had been sighted off New Guinea. John had given Donelson a token that he said Edwin Booth would recognize. The St. Louis reporter, who saw this token, described it as a gold medal presented to the elder Booth "by the citizens of New York."

There are many strange things in this narrative. Why did the audience shout "Booth"? Why did Frederick Ward bid him begone? Who were the four men that shared the fortunes of Booth—but did not know who he was?

Booth would not have been welcomed by John H. Surratt; as late as 1898 Surratt said, "Ah! Wilkes Booth. I loathe him." Out in China, Frederick Townsend Ward died in battle on September 21st, 1862—thirty months before Lincoln's assassination; so Donelson's Booth could not have served in Ward's army nor been ordered by Ward to quit Shanghai.

In the 'eighties another Booth was found in Richmond, Virginia. There, some twenty years previously, young J. Wilkes had made friends and met encouragement as an actor. In Richmond from 1878 to 1884 lived an Episcopal clergyman, James G. Armstrong. His hair was flowing and dark—"black as a raven's wing." His pulpit style was highly dramatic. He liked the theater and took an interest in the amateur theatricals organized by young people of his church. Slightly lame, he walked with a cane. Though clean-shaven, he somewhat resembled John Booth in face and figure. He seemed mildly aware of the resemblance, and evidently did not object to having it noticed and mentioned. Ro-

mantic Southern ladies must have asked one another in subdued voices: "What do you *really* think?"

Armstrong went from Richmond to Atlanta in 1884. In 1888 he quit the ministry to become a lecturer. His favorite lectures were said to be on Hamlet and Richard III. He lived until 1891. A dozen years after his death the New York *Herald* investigated his early history.<sup>7</sup>

There was no mystery about his career. He had prepared for the ministry of the United Presbyterian Church at Xenia (Ohio) Theological Seminary. From 1859 to 1863 he preached at Sidney (Shelby County), Ohio. Then he joined the Protestant Episcopal Church, was ordained in that body, and was rector successively at Palmyra, Missouri (1871); at Hannibal, Sam Clemens' home town (1871-1874); and at Wheeling, West Virginia (1874-1878). From Wheeling he went to Richmond.

Records<sup>8</sup> show that Armstrong, born at Ballymena, Ireland, July 24th, 1828, was ten years older than Booth; that he was a graduate of Queen's College, Belfast; and that he did not come to America until 1856. The *Herald* considered that Armstrong had been "affecting a pose in permitting the rumors about him to be circulated."

In spite of the evidence to the contrary, there are many stories that Armstrong was Booth. During an engagement of Edwin Booth at Atlanta, Armstrong was in a stage box. When these two "looked into each other's eyes across the footlights," many in the audience "felt the play pause." At one o'clock of the next morning (this story adds) Edwin Booth was driven "in a close carriage" to visit Armstrong. Defendant in an ecclesiastical trial (ran another anecdote), Armstrong was asked, "Are you John Wilkes Booth?" and replied, "I am on trial as James Armstrong, not as John Wilkes Booth." But (declared a third account) Armstrong after he had left the ministry, admonished his wife: "Never forget that you have Wilkes Booth for husband, and Lincoln's blood is still on his hands."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Apr. 26, 1903; literary section, pp. 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Supplied by the Rev. W. G. Moorehead, president of Xenia College, who knew Armstrong personally.

<sup>9</sup> While at Sidney he was married to Miss Alma Hitchcock. She survived him and was living in Atlanta in 1903.



One day a stranger in Atlanta was standing at the main entrance to the Kimball House when Armstrong passed by. The stranger raised aloft both hands and cried, "John Wilkes Booth, as I live!" When bystanders told him the man he had seen was the Rev. J. G. Armstrong, the venerable stranger said, "That may be the name he goes by here, but his real name is John Wilkes Booth."

There was a story that Armstrong wore his hair long to hide a tell-tale scar on the back of his neck. This, of course, was the "mark of the scalpel"—the scar "like the cicatrix of a burn"—that John Booth, when he fled in 1865, was known to have carried. One woman alleged that Armstrong's daughter—who, though she had "dark brown hair and big blue gray eyes," was said to look like the Booths—never wore a low-necked gown "except with a band of dark plush or something around her throat." This was, of course, to hide a strawberry mark like her father's scar!

Out of the hills of Morgan county, Tennessee, from the little town of Wartburg, abode mainly of Germans devoted to culture of the grape, issued in 1885 the story of another Booth.<sup>10</sup> In 1866 a stranger had arrived by stage at Wartburg and put up at the town's one hotel. At first he remained aloof, with door locked and shutters closed. After a time, under the name Sinclair, he mingled with the village-folk, but he was still a mystery.

Whenever general talk turned to the "late unpleasantness," he would abruptly depart. Once he searched eagerly and long for a paper he had accidentally dropped. This was found by somebody else and contained an account of the murder of Lincoln. When Sinclair retrieved it, he fell ill. In delirium he cried out the names Atzerodt, Herold, Paine, Mudd, and Spangler, and let slip that his own name was rightly Booth. On recovery he would admit nothing.

During the first week of March 1885, a visitor from Fredericksburg, Virginia, was in Wartburg. When first he laid eyes on Sinclair, he cried out: "Can that be Erastus Booth, Wilkes Booth's brother? The last time I saw him was in Washington, just after Lincoln was assassinated." Next day Sinclair was greeted by some

<sup>10</sup> New York *Tribune*, Mar. 13; p. 1.



hardy individual with, "Hello, Booth!" He paused, recovered himself, passed on. But that night he disappeared from Wartburg and its vine-clad slopes.

Though Sinclair was under small-town inspection for nineteen years, personal details regarding him are woefully lacking. There was no Booth brother named Erastus. The Booth brother in Washington "just after Lincoln was assassinated" was Junius Brutus Booth II, who was imprisoned there. Perhaps the "creator" of the story confused Brutus and Erastus!

In 1898, the newspapers were printing vague stories of a wanderer in Brazil who was thought by many to be John Booth. Mrs. J. M. Christ of Beloit, Wisconsin, told a representative of the Beloit *Daily News*: "John Wilkes Booth is not living in Brazil under an assumed name. He is dead. But he was not shot. He died a natural death years ago in England. Men are often afraid that women can't keep a secret, but I have kept that one for long, long years." Her story was that at the outbreak of the Civil War her first husband, Thomas Haggett, was skipper of the *Mary Porter*, a schooner of 800 tons burden. When their house in New Orleans was sacked by Union troops, she made her home aboard the *Mary Porter*. Three times the schooner ran the blockade at Wilmington with contraband.

In June 1865, a little over two months after Lincoln's murder, the *Mary Porter* was at Havana, loading sugar for Nassau. There two men came aboard—evidently persons of distinction, for Captain Haggett told his wife she must let them have her stateroom. On the third day out, he "very impressively" informed her that the passengers were "Ralph Semmes, of *Alabama* fame"—and John Wilkes Booth.

It was strange that she had not recognized John Booth, for she said that in New York she had known him well, also Edwin and Junius Brutus the elder. But she explained that he was "haggard and emaciated, suffering under a mental strain as well as from the broken leg that had had little treatment and no rest." And of course she believed that he was dead. "He still limped," she said, "and I suppose he limped until the day he died." Captain Hag-

gett told her that Booth, after having his leg set, went overland to the coast of Florida, got to Key West, and from there made Havana in a little sailboat.

Though John behaved in "a peculiar, moody manner" and "seemed to be remorseful," Mrs. Christ, who said she had known many actors, did not think him any queerer than the others. She made no difficulty about being hostess to him—she was herself "in a measure embittered" against the North.

Displaying "a large diamond in a gold setting" engraved with Booth's initials, she declared proudly, "That is a little piece of property that I wouldn't take a great deal for." Booth, she said, had given it to her when he left the *Mary Porter* in Nassau harbor—"in recognition . . . of the inconveniences I had subjected myself to for his comfort." He stayed at the Victoria Hotel, and during the next two weeks she saw him a number of times. Semmes and he were waiting for the steamer *Wild Pigeon*, loading for England. Of his death there, some years afterward, she heard "through his family."

Mrs. Christ had her own substitute victim. "John Wilkes Booth disappeared from history," she said, "at Dr. Mudd's residence. The man who was shot in the barn was undoubtedly Booth's accomplice, Fox. By a strange coincidence he also limped, as from a broken leg, and had a scar upon his neck, as Booth had. . . . To believe that Booth died in that burning barn, I should have to reject the evidence of my senses, and I am not ready to do that."

But there is strong evidence *against* her story. For one thing, in June 1865 Raphael Semmes of the *Alabama* had given his parole and was living at his home in Mobile, 802 Government Street, which he had just reached in May, after an arduous trip from Richmond. There he remained until his arrest in the following December.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, John Booth did not disappear at Dr. Samuel Mudd's. Thirdly, no conspirator or accomplice named Fox is on the record.

Mrs. Christ's anecdotes of the Booths were sketchy and inaccurate. She and her husband were "at the theater which burned during a play by the Booths." She thought the play was "Hamlet."

<sup>11</sup> Semmes, "Memoirs of Service Afloat"; p. 823. W. A. Roberts, "Semmes of the Alabama"; pp. 243-245.

John "came before the curtain and announced that for reasons he could not then explain, the play would have to be suspended." He requested the audience to leave, promising that the box-office would refund all money. "At that moment the stage was burning, and it was only Booth's self-possession that averted a panic." But in fact the three Booths—Edwin, John, and Junius Brutus II—appeared together only once, at the Winter Garden, New York, on November 25th, 1864, in "Julius Cæsar." It was Edwin who came before the curtain. The fire was in the Lafarge House, next door. The audience was soon quieted, and the play continued. Had Mrs. Christ known John, she would hardly have confused him with Edwin, or got so many details wrong.

The very next day after Mrs. Christ's story appeared in the *Beloit News*, a fellow townsman of hers told his story of Booth's escape.<sup>12</sup> Wilson D. Kenzie said that as a member of company F, First U. S. Artillery, he had been stationed at New Orleans during the winter of 1862-1863. There he became "thoroughly acquainted" with John Booth, who was passing the winter in that city and who frequently visited the army quarters. In Kenzie's company was a private named Zisjen, who knew of Kenzie's acquaintance with Booth.

In April 1865 the company was at Arlington Heights, just across the river from Washington. "Zisjen's term in the regular army having expired, he re-enlisted in the volunteers, in a company commanded by Boston Corbett. They were stationed within a stone's throw of us." Kenzie was at the play in Ford's on that night of April 14th. When a great shout went up that Lincoln had been shot, he ran to get his horse and dashed for the Heights. He notified his commanding officer, Lieutenant Norris, and the company was quickly in the saddle, ready for duty.

"We received no orders, however, until next morning, when we were commanded to reconnoitre around the outskirts. We finally brought up at the barn around which so much interest has centered, and there saw Corbett's command. Zisjen ran toward me, exclaiming, 'Kenzie, Corbett has killed a man who he says is Booth. Come and see.'" Kenzie dismounted and looked down at

<sup>12</sup> *Beloit Daily News*, Apr. 20, 1898; p. 3.



the man's face. "I had never seen the man before. It was not Booth nor did it resemble him and I said so. Corbett overheard my remark and was much displeased. Lieut. Norris told me to keep still. In fact, I received very distinct orders to thereafter keep my mouth shut."

The man in the barn, Kenzie said, had already surrendered when Corbett shot him. Zisjen called Corbett "coward" and "cur"—which "would have been serious for Zisjen had he been in the regular army." Kenzie said: "The government never paid a dollar of the big reward it offered for Booth's capture."

Wasn't it hard to doubt Kenzie? There, on the wall in the room of the interview, hung his sword; and he had (so he said) been on guard over Lincoln's body as it lay in state in the White House. But what were the facts?

Joseph Zisgen (not Zisjen) *was* present at the capture of Herold and Booth—one of seventeen privates of the Sixteenth New York Cavalry who were. The detachment also included seven corporals and two sergeants—one of them Boston Corbett. The officer in immediate command of the detachment was Lieut. Edward P. Doherty. No other military unit whatever had part in the capture or was at Garrett's that day. These men, all of whose names are of record, were ordered out not on April 15th, the day after the murder, but on April 24th. It is impossible that Kenzie could have been at Garrett's. Perhaps he did not even know where the barn was; or he would not have spoken as if it were on the "outskirts" of Washington. Lastly, John Booth did not spend the winter of 1862-1863 in New Orleans, and probably Kenzie did not know him at all.

Kenzie was wrong about the reward, too. It was fully paid, and Joseph Zisgen got \$1,653.85 as his share. There is no evidence, except Kenzie's word, that "the man in the barn" had surrendered before he was shot; but evidence that he had not is abundant.

By 1929 the wanderer had turned up in no less than twenty different guises, according to a count said to have been carefully kept by Herbert W. Fay, custodian of the Lincoln tomb at Springfield. Of these the most conspicuous was John St. Helen—thanks



to "Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth," a book by Finis L. Bates, an attorney of Memphis, Tennessee.<sup>13</sup>

Of Bates' book the New York *Herald* said:

If the style be the man, then one must premise that Mr. Bates' intelligence, attainments and taste, as revealed through this medium, are not such as would win his case with an impartial jury. The style is at once slipshod and gaudy. On the one hand, the author falls into such malapropisms as to speak of his hero's 'inimical manner'; on the other he soars into the empyrean on the wings of such bathos as this:—

"Then, just as twilight was being clasped into the folds of night by the stars of a cloudless sky, I sought seclusion while the world paused, lapped in the universal laws of rest, and entered dreamland on that bark of sleep, the sister ship of death, pillowed within the rainbow of hope, a fancy fed by the air castles of youth."

Stuff of this sort prejudices one at the start. The story Mr. Bates has to tell is one that awakens a distrust more logical than mere prejudice. . . .

Read Bates' "Escape," and you will agree that the *Herald* was putting it mildly. The book is often crude to the verge of illiteracy. It is marked throughout by wild implausibilities, by ignorance, misstatement, suppression, evasion, and plain disingenuousness. Yet about 75,000 copies are thought to have been sold; mainly in the South and Southwest. Editors chose to regard it as "timely." It entered the proceedings of historical societies. It gave new life to the legend that Booth had survived and escaped.

*Harper's Magazine* at last commissioned William G. Shepherd, a feature writer, "to probe the evidence to a conclusive issue." The account of Shepherd's "remarkable adventure in journalism" was published in *Harper's* for November 1924. "Through several long drowsy summer afternoons" in Memphis, Bates, "a sturdy white-haired Southern lawyer," talked to Shepherd, "in soft Southern dialect," and Shepherd "listened enthralled."<sup>14</sup> Shep-

<sup>13</sup> The *editio princeps* (Memphis, 1907) was shortly followed by others (some of them issued from Parkersburg, West Virginia), with an expanded title and several additional illustrations, including a frontispiece of the author.

<sup>14</sup> According to Shepherd (p. 705), Bates had been "a state's attorney general." Similar assertions have been made elsewhere—e.g., in the *Herald Tribune* (New York), Dec. 17, 1931; p. 13. From the office of the attorney-general of the State of Tennessee, a query brought this reply: "We have had no Attorney General of the State of Tennessee by the name of Finis L. Bates. If this man was ever Attorney General in this State he possibly held the office of District Attorney General."

herd "could not doubt this man's sincerity" and accepted at face value Bates' description of "the years of time and thousands of dollars" expended "for the correction of history, sir.'" He thought that John St. Helen's yarn (as relayed by Bates) "fitted so plausibly into the true and inner account of the movements and experiences of the assassin of Abraham Lincoln." Shepherd was a good reporter—but scarcely an expert in that particular field. Yet even the better-informed and more skeptical Lloyd Lewis considered that Bates, being a lawyer, "marshaled his evidence cleverly"; and that he was probably sincere. Bates lived until Thanksgiving Day of 1923 and devoted much of his time to collecting further "evidence."

## 2.

Remember, as we go over the main details of Bates' story, that there are two versions of it: one in his book, "Escape"; and the other in Shepherd's report, as printed in *Harper's Magazine* for November 1924.

About forty miles southwest of Fort Worth, Texas, is Granbury, county seat of Hood County. In the spring of 1872 Bates was practicing law there, and there he first met John St. Helen. One of Bates' earliest clients had been indicted for running a saloon without a license in the neighboring hamlet of Glen Rose.<sup>15</sup> The real culprit was St. Helen. He admitted his guilt, but refused to attend court in behalf of the defendant. He promised Bates: "I shall see you, and of my purpose and destiny speak—until *then*—" "Then" he retained Bates as counsel.<sup>16</sup> "I say to you, as my attorney, that my name is not John St. Helen, as you know me and suppose me to be, and for this reason I cannot afford to go to Tyler before the Federal Court, in fear that my true identity be discovered, as the Federal Courts are more or less presided over in the South and officered by persons heretofore, as well as now, connected with the Federal Army and government, and the risk would be too great for me to take."

<sup>15</sup> Glen Rose was in Hood County until 1875, when Somervell County was organized from Hood, with Glen Rose as county seat. (Ewell's "History." Letter of W. E. Porter, Granbury.)

<sup>16</sup> "Escape," p. 13.

In October 1872 St. Helen removed his liquor business to Granbury; but (says Bates) he always "appeared to have more money than was warranted by his stock in trade" and he employed his ample leisure in reciting Shakespeare's plays—with special preference for "Richard III." Bates on one page notes of St. Helen that "the flashes which came from his keen, penetrating black eyes spoke of desperation and a capacity for crime"; on another he refers to the man's "consummate ease of manner and reassuring appearance." He alludes to St. Helen's "full, clear voice" and "complete knowledge of elocution"—to the recitations that "charmed the ear and pleased all listeners"; but he also says that on occasion St. Helen's "breath came hard, almost to a wheeze" in what seemed to be "a bronchial or an asthmatic affliction of the throat and chest." He says (in the book) that he never knew of St. Helen's "taking strong drink of any character," but he told Shepherd that St. Helen "drank heavily."

St. Helen was (according to Bates) a handsome fellow—a man who "entertained you to mirth or to tears"; thrilling the evening assemblies of Granbury with his rendition of "Locksley Hall," or "standing in graceful poise" at his own bar, "holding his left hand well extended" and declaiming:

"Come not when I am dead  
To shed thy tears around my head.  
Let the wind sweep and the plover cry,  
But thou, O fool man, go by."<sup>17</sup>

He showed "intimacy with every detail of theatrical work." Periodicals of the theater lay about his room behind the saloon. The comedian Roland Reed, then in his twenties, played a brief engagement at Granbury. Bates and St. Helen attended all the performances, and St. Helen invited Bates and Reed to accompany him on a morning walk to view the Brazos River in flood. During the walk St. Helen launched into a monologue on "the highest class of acting," and likened one of Reed's portrayals to "a simpleton attempting to impersonate the character and eccentricities of an idiot."

Reading, reciting, sitting in at "amusing games of cards," St.

<sup>17</sup> A sad corruption of Tennyson.

Helen—according to Bates—was a “social favorite,” but kept at arm’s length all except “a select few”; yet “in such a gentle and respectful way that no affront was taken.” Bates told Shepherd: “He turned me to Shakespeare and to Roman history. He gave me innumerable lessons in oratory. He taught me what to do with my hands and feet before an audience. He taught me gestures and voice inflection. His imitations of public speakers who made errors in platform manners were excruciatingly funny.”<sup>18</sup>

One night in 1877 Bates was hurriedly called to St. Helen’s bedside. In his book he says that St. Helen had for some time been gravely ill; but he told Shepherd that St. Helen’s drinking bouts were often followed by “spells.” As Shepherd reports Bates, when the doctor left the room, St. Helen said to Bates:

“I don’t believe I shall live. Reach under my pillow and take out a picture you’ll find there.” Bates found under the pillow a tintype—of St. Helen himself.

“If I don’t live,” St. Helen continued, “I want you, as my lawyer, to send that picture to Edwin Booth, in New York City, and tell him the man in that picture is dead. Tell him how I died.”

So Bates promised. Then he and “the Mexican boy” massaged St. Helen with brandy. By morning the patient was better.<sup>19</sup>

The account in Bates’ book is more explicit. There St. Helen whispers:

“I am dying. My name is John Wilkes Booth, and I am the assassin of President Lincoln. Get the picture of myself from under the pillow. I leave it with you for my future identification. Notify my brother Edwin Booth, of New York City.”

When, after “many weeks,” he recovered, he asked Bates, “Do you remember anything I said when I was sick?” “Many things,” answered Bates; and St. Helen rejoined. “Then you have my life in your keeping, but, thank God, as my attorney.” Later, as the two men sauntered along a country road (so Bates told Shepherd), St. Helen burst out:

“I am John Wilkes Booth. I am the man who killed the best man that ever lived, Abraham Lincoln.”

Then he told his story. In the book it is drawn out to much

<sup>18</sup> *Harper’s Magazine*, Nov. 1924; p. 707.

<sup>19</sup> *Ib.*; pp. 707-708.



greater length than in Shepherd's report. There are discrepancies, but in both versions Bates is scandalized, incredulous, doubtful whether his odd client is wholly responsible. "And," he writes, "in our after association, lasting about ten months, we made no further reference to the subject, which was avoided by mutual consent." For a time (he asserted) he thought the tintype was a portrait of "some one of the Herolds"—this in spite of his own story that St. Helen claimed to be Booth and had said this very tintype was a "picture of myself."

## 3.

When Bates had settled in Memphis, he began (he said) to read whatever he could find about Lincoln's murder. The more he read, the more convinced he grew that John St. Helen *was* Wilkes Booth.

He traced St. Helen to Leadville, Colorado, thence to Fresno; and was "reasonably sure" that he "still lived and could be located." On January 17th, 1898, he wrote to Secretary of War Alger, telling him that he was "in possession of such facts as are conclusive that John Wilkes Booth now lives"; and asking whether the "development" of this news would be "a matter of any importance" to the War Department. Bates' letter was shortly returned to him with the endorsement by G. Norman Lieber, Judge Advocate General: "It is recommended that he be informed that the matter is of no importance to the War Department."<sup>20</sup> Bates was not satisfied with the answer. Might not the officials of the War Department be held guilty of "assisting, by concealment, the escape of John Wilkes Booth," and thus of being accessories after the fact?

In April 1900 a letter from Bates to Secretary John Hay brought this reply:

The Secretary of State requested me to acknowledge receipt of your favor of the 24th of April and to thank you for it.

Very respectfully,  
E. J. BABCOCK,  
Private Secretary.

<sup>20</sup> The original is pictured in *Harper's Magazine*, Nov. 1924; p. 705.

"This," comments Bates, "closed my efforts at presenting the matter of Booth's discovery to the government of the United States." He determined to "appeal to the American people."

On the 13th of January 1903 the *News* and the *Wave*, newspapers of Enid, Oklahoma (then a town of some 3,500 people), announced the death that day by suicide of David E. George, a rather recent arrival from El Reno, sixty-five or seventy miles south. Most of his time in Enid he had spent in Jack Bernstein's saloon or hanging about the drab second-floor office of the Grand Avenue Hotel, where he roomed. The body was taken to W. B. Penniman's undertaking parlors, at the rear of his furniture shop. Thence it might soon have gone unclaimed to a forlorn grave; but while W. H. Ryan, Penniman's assistant, was "fixing it up," in walked a Methodist clergyman, the Rev. E. C. Harper. Harper took one look and cried out:

"Do you know who that is?"

"Why," said Ryan calmly, "his name is George."

"No, sir, it isn't," responded the Rev. Mr. Harper firmly. "That is the body of John Wilkes Booth, the man who killed Abraham Lincoln." <sup>21</sup>

Thereupon the Rev. Mr. Harper told how George had "confessed" to Mrs. Harper at El Reno in April 1900. "Of course I took special pains with the body after that," said Ryan. "I did the best job of embalming I've ever done. If it was Booth's body, I wanted to preserve it for the Washington officials when they came."

The news spread through the press of the West and South. Finis L. Bates of Memphis read the story—presumably in the *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* for Sunday, January 18th, 1903, under the heading "Wilkes Booth a Suicide." He must have been puzzled. What if *this* Booth was not *his* Booth?

He telegraphed to Penniman, asking whether he might see the body. But he did not reach Enid until six p.m. of the 23rd. His coming, he says, had been "awaited with great anxiety by a large and much-excited throng of people"; and "old Federal sol-

<sup>21</sup> From Shepherd's interview with Ryan, *Harper's Magazine*, Nov. 1924; pp. 716-717.

diers" were darkly believed to be ready to "take the body into the streets and burn it, if it should be identified as that of John Wilkes Booth." (Penniman said flatly of Bates, "His book account of all this is bunk.")

Bates went to Penniman's on the 24th, looked upon the body—and wept. "I knew him," he writes characteristically, "as instantly as men discern night from day, as the starlight from moonlight, or the moon from the light of day." Bates carried the tintype that John St. Helen had given him. He produced it, calling upon Penniman and Ryan "to bear witness with me to the identity of this dead man with the picture."<sup>22</sup>

Penniman took out letters of administration on George's "estate," which included the body. Bates by identifying the two claimants as one and the same, had quieted his own doubts. Items from Enid were welcomed by journals of Kansas City and St. Louis. The New York *Tribune* for June 3rd, 1903, reported:

St. Louis, June 2.—A dispatch to "The Globe-Democrat" from Enid, Okla., says that Junius Brutus Booth, the actor and nephew of John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln, has fully identified the remains of the man known as David E. George as his uncle.

The dispatch dated George's suicide on January 14th (instead of the correct date, January 13th), and said that he left a letter directed to Bates—for which there is no other evidence. "Mr. Bates came here at once, and fully identified the body as that of John Wilkes Booth"; and he had later obtained positive identifications "from the dead man's nephew, and from Joseph Jefferson, Miss Clara Morris and a score of others who knew him in his early days." "According to Mr. Bates' story," the dispatch added, "he had acted as Booth's confidential agent and attorney for nearly forty years." Many, as they read, were convinced that St. Helen-George was indeed John Booth; and with the introductory formula "I see by the paper," they spread the word abroad.

The officials from Washington, whom Ryan had expected, never came. The embalmed corpse of the suicide was unburied. It continued on display in Penniman's rear room. Visiting strangers were taken to gaze at it. Somebody would say, "We'd like to see

<sup>22</sup> "Escape"; pp. 254, 261-262, 274-275. Already, he recounts, "more than fifty thousand men, women, and children" had viewed the exhibit!

Booth's body, please." Penniman or an assistant would reply, "Certainly. Go right on back." "That back room," mused Ryan, "was a queer place. Almost every day some visitor would find something new, and some new story would go out."

None of those that viewed the body claimed it. Penniman, in after years at his home in Columbus, Ohio, said that the most unlikely subjects had invariably been claimed and buried. All but George.

After some years, the body was turned over to Finis Bates; presumably with the understanding that he would give it decent burial. Instead of that, Bates stored his dear old friend in the Bates garage at Memphis. And when Bates could, he rented him and leased him and let him out for hire. Small fairs and cheap side-shows proclaimed him—with acknowledgments to Bates. Every now and then Bates tried to sell him. In 1920 he offered him to Henry Ford for \$1,000—with affidavits and "a wealth of circumstantial detail."

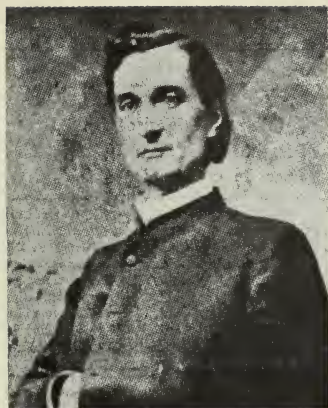
#### 4.

Bates did not make notes of St. Helen's "confession" at the time, but thirty-five years afterward he published it *verbatim*. The story that Bates put into St. Helen's mouth must have been Bates' own synthesis. He found some material for it in 1897 in a reporter's interview with David Dana, in the Boston *Sunday Globe* of December 12th, 1897. This feature article "He Almost Saved Lincoln" yielded many particulars that Bates later wove into his book.

In 1897 David Dana, then seventy-one, was living on his farm in West Lubec, Maine. He had taken a minor part in the chase after Booth into Lower Maryland. At the Trial of the Conspirators he testified that he arrived in Bryantown about one p.m., Saturday, April 15th, 1865; apprised the villagers of Lincoln's murder; told them he knew the murderer was Booth, "as near as a person could know anything." Dr. George D. Mudd (a second cousin of the alleged conspirator Dr. Samuel A. Mudd) testified that on April 15th Dana, in response to his inquiry, informed him that the President's murderer, "supposed to be a man by the name of Booth," was probably hidden in Washington.<sup>23</sup>

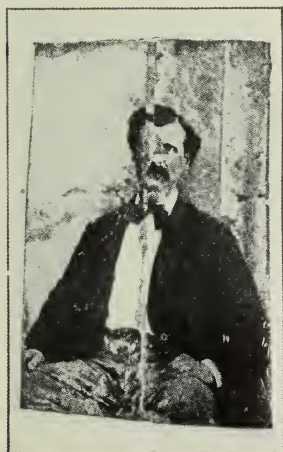
<sup>23</sup> Poore, vol. ii, pp. 67-68. N. A. Mudd, "The Life of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd"; p. 90.—On Monday morning (Apr. 17) Dr. George Mudd told Dana that on Saturday,



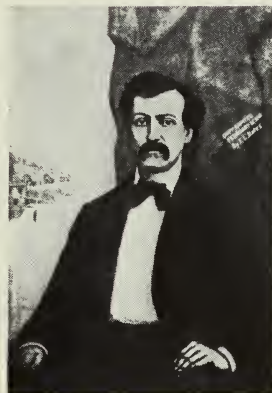


*From a portrait in the New York  
Herald*

# THE REV. J. G. ARMSTRONG OF RICHMOND AND ATLANTA



JOHN ST. HELEN OF TEXAS  
As he looked in the Bates tintype,  
from which the portrait at the  
right was made



"JOHN WILKES BOOTH,  
AGED 38"  
The manufactured portrait in  
Bates' book



In 1897 Dana represented that he had been adjutant-general on the staff of Gen. C. C. Augur, commanding the Department of Washington; that Augur gave him full discretionary powers; and that he had "laid out the plan for the capture of Booth." But the official records show that in April 1865 he was first lieutenant and provost marshal in the third brigade of the 22nd army corps, and reported to Captain Chandler, assistant adjutant-general. His story in the *Globe* is full of statements that do not agree with the known facts or are thoroughly improbable.<sup>24</sup> But it was a windfall for Bates, because Dana had really borne some part, even if but a small one, in those events.

Dana said that just before the murder he "learned that a plot was forming" and that "the blow would undoubtedly be aimed against the life of Pres. Lincoln." Forthwith he asked for (and received) "a battalion of veteran cavalry" and obtained orders for a stricter guard at all approaches in his territory. On Friday, April 14th, 1865, about one p.m., "two men appeared before the guard on the road leading into Washington from the east." Upon their refusal to state their names or their business, they were arrested and held for transfer to headquarters. In an hour or so they gave the names of Herold and Booth. Then an order came from General Augur "to release all prisoners held by the guards, and to withdraw the guard until further orders." The two men were thereupon released and at once rode on into Washington City. After the murder, Augur, "with streaming eyes," exclaimed to Dana, "My God, Marshal, if I had listened to your advice this terrible thing never would have happened!"

Here is suggestion of evil contrivance by those in high places. Here is the hint of an abrupt change in military instructions that permitted the assassin to escape. Small wonder that Bates fastened upon Dana's reminiscences. From them he created his narrative of John St. Helen.

Bates says that St. Helen told him that on the morning of April Apr. 15, two suspicious persons had been at Samuel Mudd's house. This he did with Samuel Mudd's approval. It does not appear that Dana followed up the clue.

<sup>24</sup>In a letter to Bates (Dec. 25, 1897), Dana claimed also that Atzerodt "was captured by my troops." (See the *Dearborn Independent*, Apr. 18, 1925; p. 14.) But Atzerodt was arrested by Sergeant Gemmill, under orders from Captain Townsend; and the arrest was made at Germantown, Md., northwest of Washington City, miles from the region at the southeast to which Dana had been sent.

14th, 1865, he and Herold were riding back to Washington City. They had been almost to Richmond, scanning the route by which Lincoln was to be abducted. At the Navy Yard bridge they were stopped; and having refused to give their names, were detained "until in the afternoon about 2 o'clock." Having given a satisfactory account of themselves, they were allowed to proceed.

They "went straight to the Kirkwood Hotel." There Vice-President Johnson lived, and there had been "the place of rendezvous of the conspirators." Upon arriving at the Kirkwood about three o'clock, St. Helen discussed with Johnson the changed posture of affairs, especially Lee's surrender, of which St. Helen had learned only that afternoon. The end of the war seemed near. The plan to take Lincoln to Richmond was impossible, now that the Confederate government had abandoned the city. Johnson (said St. Helen) "with pale face, fixed eyes, and quivering lips," demanded:

"Are you too faint-hearted to kill him?"

Thus it was Johnson who first gave St. Helen (according to Bates) the notion of murder. St. Helen insisted that escape from the city would be impossible. Johnson promised that it would be certain. He likewise promised that General Grant and Mrs. Grant would not be present at Ford's Theatre, and that such persons as "would not interfere with me [St. Helen] in my purpose" would occupy the box with the President and Mrs. Lincoln. General Augur, he said, would call in the guards from the Navy Yard bridge; but if the guards had not yet left, the password was "T.B." or "T. B. Road."<sup>25</sup> Once he was President, Johnson would grant St. Helen "absolute pardon, if need be."

In a letter written to Dana in 1897, F. A. Demond of Cavendish, Vermont, "a member of your [Dana's] old provost guard," said that he was stationed at the Uniontown end of the Navy Yard bridge when Booth rode across from Washington City; and that he heard Booth give the guard on post "some kind of answer about going to see some one who lived out on the T. B. road." Bates apparently developed this hazy reference into the assertion that Booth and Herold "were permitted to pass the guards without

<sup>25</sup> "Escape"; pp. 41-44.—"East Potomac bridge," "East Potomac river bridge," are among Bates' names for the Navy Yard bridge over the East Branch.



arrest by simply giving the pass word 'T.B.' or 'T. B. Road'." And T. B., says Bates, "was meaningless, unless understood by the guard on duty."<sup>26</sup> Actually, T. B. was a crossroads settlement below Surrattsville. Its name was said to have been derived from initials found cut on a stone boundary-mark in the vicinity.

Many details in St. Helen's narrative as given by Bates do not fit the facts. He had fractured his "right shin bone"—"about six or eight inches above the ankle"; and he exhibited to Bates a right shin with a "nicked or uneven surface." It had been fractured "against the edge of the stage." He said that Dr. Mudd made splints with "pieces of cigar boxes." He said that Herold held the horse at the rear door of Ford's; that he and Herold crossed the Potomac on the night of *April 21st*; that the Garrett house was three miles or more from the highway to Bowling Green; that he reached Garrett's on April 22nd.<sup>27</sup> *Could the real Booth possibly have told the story so?*

It was Samuel Cox's overseer, St. Helen said, who got them across the Potomac. The overseer, Ruddy, had previously arranged the meeting with the young Confederates, Jett, Ruggles, and Bainbridge; and he accompanied the fugitives over the Rappahannock to Port Royal, where these three were waiting. St. Helen then discovered that he had lost his diary, some letters, and a "picture of my sister." He asked Ruddy to turn back and look for these. It was settled that Ruggles and Bainbridge would escort St. Helen to Garrett's; and that Herold and Ruddy would meet him there next day.

But next day (April 23rd, in the Bates chronology) the Yankee cavalry "crossed the Rappahannock river in hot pursuit." Ruggles and Bainbridge supplied a horse for St. Helen; and from "a wooded ravine" near the Garrett house the three rode away westward. Early on the 24th St. Helen parted from his companions. He rode through West Virginia and Kentucky into Mississippi, and went on to the Indian Territory, where for about eighteen months he was "associated with the Apache tribe."<sup>28</sup>

Thence he drifted to Nebraska City, and there a contractor

<sup>26</sup> *Ib.*; p. 111.

<sup>27</sup> *Ib.*; pp. 47, 48, 50, 54.

<sup>28</sup> *Ib.*; pp. 58, 129-131, 293.

hired him to drive a four-mule team in a wagon train hauling provisions to Salt Lake City for the Federal government. *En route* he quietly disappeared and "proceeded to San Francisco, California, to meet my mother and my brother, Junius Brutus Booth." Then he went to Mexico and Texas.<sup>29</sup> Who was shot? Ruddy.

This is the gist of the tale that Finis Bates ascribed to John St. Helen. We cannot be sure how much of it is Bates and how much St. Helen—but Bates seems to preponderate. Is there any fact? What is known of St. Helen?

## 5.

At Iredell, in Bosque County, Texas, John St. Helen was a school-teacher, taught in the Hester log schoolhouse, and always wore his hat in school hours. Indeed, tradition in Iredell was that St. Helen had never been seen bareheaded. He hailed from New Orleans, and it was said that the name he there passed under was Ney. From Iredell he went to Glen Rose, some twenty miles northeast, where he kept a saloon and where Finis Bates met him. In October 1872 he went to Granbury.

Ewell's "History of Hood County" has this exciting episode:<sup>30</sup>

Wray [James Wray of Squaw Creek] was a brave and brawny man, but quiet and peaceably disposed; and it is related that during the turbulent times, two men at enmity with him, conspired to make way with him. One of these, St. Helen, by name, had a serious impediment in his speech, caused by asthma, so he could rarely speak above a whisper. They agreed to get Wray into a house, extinguish the lights and St. Helen was to immediately knock Wray down and his confederate then to fall upon him and cut his throat; but when St. Helen made at his victim, the latter anticipating him, reversed the plan by felling St. Helen, who in the darkness was immediately fallen upon by his fellow conspirator with knife applied to his throat and would soon have been dispatched, but the exigency of the situation caused the unfortunate St. Helen, for the moment, to gain the use of his vocal cords and loudly announce his identity.

<sup>29</sup> Bates states that at Enid in 1903—four years before his book was issued—he talked with one Treadkell [Thrailkell?], who told at length of a Jesse Smith whom he had once employed as a teamster. Treadkell was delivering supplies to United States troops at Salt Lake City. Jesse knew little about mules but around camp was the life of the party, fascinating all with his "grandly eloquent" recitations of poems and Shakespearean plays. The day before Salt Lake City was reached, he took French leave.

<sup>30</sup> Chapt. xxxvii, p. 91.

In 1921 F. L. Black, acting for the *Dearborn Independent*, visited Hood County and interviewed all persons he could find who had known St. Helen, or who had been there in St. Helen's day.<sup>31</sup> Says Black: "Mr. Bates' descriptions of John St. Helen, when read to Granbury people who knew him, greatly amused them." Here are extracts from statements they made:

I was in Granbury during the time St. Helen was here. . . . St. Helen was a typical saloon desperado. He had a quick eye and sometimes his eyes were rather wild looking. (*Frank Gaston*, editor of the *Granbury News*)

He never got dramatic unless warmed up with whisky. He was inclined to quote poetry both when sober and drunk, but I never saw him read any book or have any in his possession. . . . I do not remember that St. Helen and Finis Bates were ever intimately acquainted, and do not think it could have been possible, due to their difference in age and character. Bates was just a young green kid and St. Helen was a hardened man of the world of at least forty. (*A. P. Gordon*, in Hood County from 1871)

St. Helen once started a fight in my place of business with a half-breed Indian by the name of Selvidge. St. Helen came in half-drunk and in a violent and vicious mood. Just how the fight started, I do not know, but the first thing I saw was Selvidge on the floor with "Saint" on top of him. Bill McDonald was in the saloon and ran up with a knife to aid St. Helen. I grabbed Bill and pushed him out through the front door. When I turned I saw St. Helen going out the back door and found Selvidge back of the counter with a bloody knife. He had cut St. Helen across the back of the neck, opening the muscles, which left a bad scar. (*D. L. Nutt*)

While I remember him quoting poetry, I do not remember of him ever making fine speeches; this would have been impossible anyway on account of his throat. (*George W. Wright*)

J. H. Doyle, merchant in Granbury in the 'seventies, and D. L. Nutt, who had been prominent in Hood County, both denied that St. Helen ever had much money. Ashley W. Crockett, formerly of the *Vidette*, was sure that if St. Helen received periodical remittances the fact must have become known. Ashley Crockett, grandson of Davy Crockett of the Alamo and well versed in the early-day history of Hood County, said in a letter responding to various queries of the present writer:

<sup>31</sup> *Dearborn Independent*, Apr. 18, 1925; p. 10.—Sworn statements by these persons were taken.—The *Vidette* was Hood County's first newspaper.

In the fall of 1872, a man came to this town under the name of John St. Helen and entered the saloon business, naming his saloon the "Black Hawk." . . . St. Helen left Granbury in May 1873 for Colorado. . . . While a very young man in Granbury in 1872, I knew this man St. Helen but was not at all intimate with him, and have never believed that he was John Wilkes Booth.<sup>32</sup>

And what is actually known of David E. George before his suicide? He was a house painter—"an ordinary painter, not very good or very bad"—and worked at his trade when there was work to do. Out of work, he loafed around stores and police stations. When he left El Reno, he owed a local merchant \$40 for paint. He spoke with a Southern drawl, gave signs of some education, but was "not particularly polished." A periodic drinker, he mumbled when in his cups. Sometimes he "recited." Occasionally he fell into morose spells and spoke little. Once, in El Reno, he got violent, brandished a six-shooter, and was arrested. He dyed his mustache and hair, and was neat about his clothing.

At El Reno he bought a four room cottage for \$700 and paid \$350 by check. (Bates says that the purchase price was \$3,500 and that George "lacked a small amount of having enough money to pay cash." <sup>33</sup> The correct figures are matters of record.) J. W. Simmons and his wife occupied the cottage, rent free; gave George board and lodging; and looked after him. Before long, Mrs. Simmons wearied of the lodger's drunken clamor; so she and her husband took the house and gave George a note for \$350.

In April 1900, while living with the Simmons family, he swallowed a heavy dose of a drug and proclaimed that he was about to die. To a lady whom he had known but a few weeks and who happened to be at the time a visitor in the house, he "confessed," just before lapsing into unconsciousness, that he had killed "one of the best men that ever lived, Abraham Lincoln." He asked her to bring pencil and paper, and wrote: "I am going to die before the sun goes down. J. Wilkes Booth." She became in May the wife of the Rev. E. C. Harper, who on January 14th, 1903, burst in

<sup>32</sup> Bates says ("Escape"; p. 83) it was "in the spring of 1878" that St. Helen departed for Leadville. He told F. L. Black that St. Helen was a founder of the Elks at Leadville, where his portrait adorned the lodge. Black established that the portrait was of an actor named Charles Vincent (*Dearborn Independent*, Apr. 18, 1925; p. 14).

<sup>33</sup> "Escape"; p. 289.



upon Ryan in the Enid undertaking establishment with the words, "That is the body of John Wilkes Booth."

David George was restored to life; and as he had drifted from Hennessey to El Reno, so now he drifted from El Reno to Enid.<sup>34</sup> On the morning of January 13th, 1903, Lee Boyd, another roomer at Enid's Grand Avenue Hotel, heard groans in George's cubicle, the outer wall of which was a low partition. Stepping from a trunk in the hallway, Boyd clambered over and found that George had taken poison and was in convulsions. Within about five minutes Dr. R. M. Field arrived, but it was too late. Both Boyd and Dr. Field made sworn statements that there was no confession by George at this time. George was quite unable to speak.<sup>35</sup>

Bates' book reports Brown, the hotel clerk, as saying George was stricken after eleven on the night of the 13th, and *when the doctor had left him* (about four a.m. on the 14th) declared: "My name is not George. I am John Wilkes Booth." But George's death was reported in the evening papers of the 13th, and Undertaker Penniman said that death occurred about ten-thirty or eleven on the morning of that day! Bates falsified the date to make time for the deathbed confession.<sup>36</sup>

*Were John St. Helen and David E. George one and the same?*

Both St. Helen and George were periodic "drunks": and when drunk, both were noisy. From Glen Rose the present writer had the word of an old lady in whose house St. Helen lodged a while that he "would jump up in the night and scream there was some one after him." At El Reno, Mrs. J. W. Simmons found David E. George much too vociferous. Drunk or sober, each was inclined to repeat scraps of poetry. Amateur elocutionists and vocalists were

<sup>34</sup> Bates says that George lived at Hennessey as a "gentleman of leisure" under the name of George D. Ryan ("Escape"; pp. 229, 238, 240). Perhaps that was an attempt to render him more mysterious. He lived in Hennessey as David E. George and worked at his trade of house-painting. (*Dearborn Independent*, Apr. 25, 1925; p. 10).

<sup>35</sup> This is here emphasized because for use in his book Bates altered the original affidavit made by Dumont (proprietor) and Brown (clerk) of the Grand Avenue Hotel, causing it to read that George took fifteen grains of strychnine or arsenic and "died from the effects of said poison at 6:30 o'clock a.m., on the 14th of January, 1903." F. L. Black charged that subsequent to the writing of the original document these words were added: "George declaring on his death bed that he was John Wilks [*sic*] Booth." This does not, however, appear in the printed form. ("Escape"; p. 272).

<sup>36</sup> "Escape"; pp. 266-271.

common among barroom *habitués*—especially in frontier towns. Asked whether George recited Shakespeare, W. H. Ryan, the undertaker of Enid, laughed and answered: "It may have sounded like Shakespeare to the men in the saloons who heard it. But we didn't know much of Shakespeare in Oklahoma Territory in those days."

By Bates' telling, St. Helen's "favorite occupation" was reading Shakespeare's plays, "or rather reciting them as he alone could do." Further, "his special preference seemed to be that of Richard III." And, says Bates, "he began his recitations, as I now remember him, by somewhat transposing the introductory of Richard III, saying:

"'I would I could laugh with those who laugh and weep with those who weep, wet my eyes with artificial tears and frame my face to all occasions—' following with much of the recitation of Richard III." . . .<sup>37</sup>

Bates was no Shakespearean! In Gloster's soliloquy that opens "Richard III" there is nothing (in the original or the Cibber version) like this quotation. It seems to be mangled Scripture (Rom. xii, 15) combined with two lines from Gloster's long speech in the third part of "Henry VI" (act iii, sc. 2, 184-185). It is hard to imagine that Bates heard *these* words from John Booth!

According to a statement by Mrs. Harper (then Mrs. Young) in January 1921, George, when he made his confession to her in April 1900, explained that "he had friends in Washington, who, after he escaped from the theatre in which he killed Lincoln, had hidden him in a trunk, and got him on a boat for Europe, where he had remained for ten years." Thus he would have been abroad at the very time when St. Helen was running the Black Hawk in Granbury.

St. Helen was a gambler, always equipped with revolver and knife, and even in frontier Texas passed for a "bad man." George did own a shooting-iron (for the police of El Reno took it from him), but he was "harmless when sober." He was a roving house painter, innocent of bravado, and slow pay for his little advertisement in the El Reno *Democrat*. There is no reference to his hav-

<sup>37</sup> *Ib.*; p. 22.

ing the asthmatic wheeze or vocal impediment that troubled St. Helen. By Bates' statement, John St. Helen had "flashing black eyes";<sup>38</sup> but Mrs. Harper said George's eyes were "deep blue." And Ryan, the undertaker (later Enid's mayor), affirmed: "A hundred times in that back room I went to the corpse and raised the lids and looked at those eyes, and they were dark blue." So bloated with poison was George's body that Bates' instant identification could hardly have been *bona fide*; especially as it was more than a quarter-century since Bates had seen St. Helen.<sup>39</sup>

Bates was sure that regular remittances came to St. Helen and George from the Booth family, either directly or through an agent. But apparently neither ever had any money.

St. Helen gained a little income from selling whisky and from petty gambling. George made two wills—one at El Reno, dated June 17th, 1902; the other at Enid on December 31st. By the second he bequeathed \$5,500 from nonexistent life-insurance policies; seven hundred acres of land he never owned; cash he did not have. The land was said to be in the Chickasaw nation, but the first Chickasaw allotments to individuals were not made until April 1903—after the date of the will; and George was not enrolled in the Chickasaw nation. The Simmons note for \$350 was left to the attorney that drew the will. George, when he died, had nothing but his clothing, a watch, a trunk, some papers (which Penniman took), and two cents in his pocket.

The papers included this note:

Jan. 13 1902 [error for 1903]

I am informed that I made a will a few days ago and am indistinct of having done so. I herew[ith] recall every letter syllable and word of any will that I may have signed at Enid.

I owe Jack Bernstein about Ten Dollars but he has my watch in pawn for the amt.

D. E. GEORGE

Possibly the second will was a device to revive George's declining credit.

Bates ascribed to St. Helen a keen interest in the drama and things theatrical, and called George "a constant attendant at the

<sup>38</sup> *Ib.*; p. 27.

<sup>39</sup> See picture facing p. 276 of the "Escape."

theaters at El Reno, Enid, Oklahoma City, and Guthrie." <sup>40</sup> George, Bates said, was so struck by the genius of the leading lady of a theatrical company playing in those towns that he obtained an introduction to her, claiming to be J. L. Harris, a correspondent of the *Dramatic Mirror*. He acted as her dramatic coach and wrote for her a play, "A Life within the Shadow of Sin." In 1921 Bates stated that this actress was Josie Cameron (Mrs. Charles A. Cameron); Mrs. Cameron, interviewed in Chicago, said that she had known John W. Robinson, the *Mirror's* actual representative at Enid, but no J. L. Harris. Robinson had died in Enid before George arrived there. <sup>41</sup>

*Did John Booth become either St. Helen or George?*

Responsible testimony (much of it in sworn statements) by those who knew St. Helen is in such consistent disagreement with Bates' descriptions that we must look upon these as fiction. Both in broader outlines and in significant details, the St. Helen "confession" is so wholly at odds with known facts that we must suppose either that Booth by 1872 retained most fantastic memories of his own adventures or that Bates in his figments was both ignorant and clumsy.

In the case of George, W. H. Ryan was quite untouched by the arguments of Bates; and Penniman, jesting at Bates' "real positive" proofs, said, "Bates is the only man who ever tried to convince me as to the real identity of this bird."

"I never thought he was John Wilkes Booth," said C. R. Miller of El Reno, who knew George well and of whom George bought house paint and hair dye. T. F. Hensley, editor from 1901 to 1903 of the El Reno *Democrat*, said that the common impression in El Reno was that George was "just a drunken bum."

Among those who were susceptible to the Booth ballyhoo after George's death was G. E. Smith. He had lent various sums to George. His wife was the beneficiary of George's first will, and Smith himself was executor. For a time he hoped to make "big money" in partnership with Finis Bates by exhibiting the "remains." Both Mr. and Mrs. Smith were satisfied that somewhere George had "considerable property." Smith said that often George,

<sup>40</sup> "Escape"; p. 299.

<sup>41</sup> Enid *Wave*, Oct. 13, 1902.



"under the influence of liquor," had styled himself "a man with a past." Once he referred to killing somebody in Texas. George's confession to Ida Harper is quite at variance with St. Helen's confession to Bates and in itself is equally impossible.

Penniman said of Bates' tintype: "I was never able to see any striking resemblance between the body and the tintype." And he added: "In fact, Bates asked me to do all I could to make the body look like the picture and so we combed the hair and mustache accordingly." Already the dye was beginning to fade.

There is no marked resemblance between the tintype and good authentic portraits of John Booth. Bates must have been conscious of this. In his book, the "Escape," the portrait facing page 202 and titled "John Wilkes Booth, Aged 38" is not, as he states, "from the tin-type." It is from an independent and extremely wooden original, based on the tintype but with a scenic background painted in (as in old oil portraits), with the dress altered, and with the head more youthful than in the tintype and distinctly more like some of the later authentic portraits of Booth. Bates' alleged portrait of Booth at twenty-seven also is "faked." It is derived from genuine *carte-de-viste* portraits of Booth but resembles the St. Helen-Booth fraud far more than either resembles the true John Wilkes. Both are indeed counterfeit presentments—and look so. The cracked tintype that Bates produced at Enid and later exhibited to F. L. Black and W. G. Shepherd was not distinctive. On seeing a photograph of it, says F. L. Black, an undertaker in Leadville remarked: "I buried a hundred fellows that looked very much like that, back in the early days."

Bates in his book made a great to-do over Joseph Jefferson's recognizing the tintype as a portrait of Booth. He said that by appointment he called on Jefferson in Memphis on April 14th, 1903. Jefferson looked at the tintype and (according to Bates) observed, "This is John Wilkes Booth, if John Wilkes Booth was living when this picture was taken." Bates adds, "I deem it my duty to say that I was impressed with the idea that Mr. Jefferson was by no means surprised. . . . [He] gave expression to no more surprise than to ask, 'Where did you get it?' "

What Mr. Jefferson actually thought may be gathered from his reply to a letter from Oliver D. Street of Birmingham, Alabama,

at that time secretary of the Tennessee Valley Historical Society.

Buzzard's Bay, Mass., June 10, 1903

Mr. Oliver D Street

Dear Sir:

In reply to your enquiry I beg to say that a gentleman called on me last spring and related to me his story contained in your letter. He showed me also a tintype much disfigured and asked me if I did not recognize it as John Wilkes Booth. I told him that it bore a kind of resemblance to him but that as I had not seen Booth since he was 19 years old and as the tintype was evidently that of a man of 55 or sixty it was quite impossible for me to give him any satisfactory information on the subject—and this is what he calls my "identification of Booth's remains"—rather weak evidence for such an important case—and I do not think that Miss Clara Morris (who also denies the identification) has had any further testimony beyond the uncertain tintype.

The gentleman further stated that he was trying to obtain the evidence so that he could get possession of the dead man's estate for his client. My opinion is that there is not the slightest foundation for the truth of this rambling story.

Sincerely yours  
J Jefferson

Bates described identifying marks that he recognized in George's body at Enid in 1903: a high thumb-joint on the right hand; an unevenness of the right eyebrow, throwing it out of alignment with the left; and "a slight indentation on the front of the shin bone" of the right leg.<sup>42</sup> They do not prove that George was Booth. Booth's hand were not deformed. Numerous authentic photographs of him (including one that his brother Edwin kept) show his right hand plainly, with no sign of any distortion. But his left hand bore his initials in India ink—and both Penniman and Ryan said there were no such marks on George. Booth's eyebrows were not mismatched. Clara Morris, who acted with Booth in a stock company at Cleveland, Ohio, tells how, in a rehearsal of "Richard III," J. G. McCollom, the Richmond to Booth's Richard, dealt Booth an accidental sword-blow across the forehead, causing a gash that cut into "one eyebrow." Bates quotes her account<sup>43</sup> and from it he got the hypothesis of an "uneven brow." But the injury left no permanent mark.

W. E. Robare, chief of police at El Reno from 1900 to 1903,

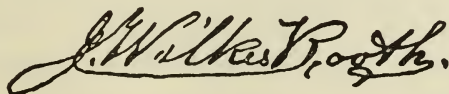
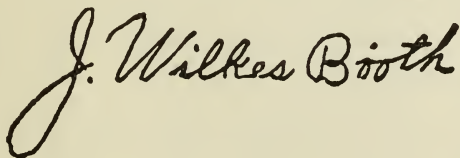
<sup>42</sup> "Escape"; pp. 262-263.

<sup>43</sup> "Life on the Stage"; pp. 97-98. "Escape"; pp. 197-199.

said of George, "His eyebrows were heavy [which Booth's were not] and were perfect matches."<sup>44</sup> Neither thumb nor eyebrow was ever mentioned by Booth's friends, referred to in testimony, spoken of in the newspapers, or included in any official descriptions of Booth.

As for an indented right shin, William H. Ryan, to whom the world owed George's mummy, said that "as far as he could see, both of George's legs were whole and sound." Shepherd, when he viewed the mummy in the Bates garage in 1924, was requested to note "a slight irregularity on the bone of the right ankle"; but he found this "difficult for me to see."<sup>45</sup> Moreover, it was Booth's *left* leg that was injured.

There are no known specimens of St. Helen's handwriting. Of George's, there are the signatures to his two wills; his check for \$350 (the payment he made on the cottage at El Reno); the sentence he wrote for Mrs. Harper, with his "J. Wilkes Booth" added thereto; and the note revoking his will of December 31st, 1902. None of these at all resembled the handwriting of John Booth as shown in his correspondence, on his signed photographs, or in his diary. W. G. Shepherd, in his investigation for *Harper's*, was sure that George's signature proved that he was not Booth, for George's writing was illiterate, each letter formed separately and painfully.<sup>46</sup>



(Above) Signature to the Memorandum D. E. George gave to Mrs. Harper

(Below) Authentic signature of John Booth

<sup>44</sup> *Dearborn Independent*, Apr. 25, 1925; p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> *Dearborn Independent*, Apr. 25, 1925; p. 11. *Harper's Magazine*, Nov. 1924; p. 703.

<sup>46</sup> In Francis Wilson's "John Wilkes Booth," the plate facing p. 250 has what is offered as a reduced facsimile of a page from Booth's diary. Unfortunately, through some error, this is not from the diary nor is the handwriting Booth's.

"Especial attention," writes Bates, "is called to Gen. Dana's identification of the tintype picture of John Wilkes Booth." Until he had written to Dana, Bates says that his own idea was that the tintype "must be a picture of some one of the Herolds."<sup>47</sup> After he wrote to Dana, Dana sent him likenesses of Booth and Herold, and then Bates says that he knew St. Helen "was indeed the man he claimed to be." But when Bates sent Dana a photograph of the St. Helen tintype, Dana suggested that it might be Junius Brutus II (of whom he evidently knew nothing), and unequivocally set down that in 1865 he had seen John Booth lying dead. In brief, Dana had helped Bates persuade himself that St. Helen was Booth—but Dana knew better.

Clara Morris was cited by Bates because her description of the John Booth she knew so perfectly fitted John St. Helen! She did not identify the two. When it was reported that Miss Morris had positively identified George's body as that of Booth, the New York *Tribune* said:

Miss Clara Morris denied last evening [June 2nd, 1903] any such identification. She said that three years ago she received a letter written in a rambling way from a man who claimed to know that Booth was living, but she paid no attention to it.<sup>48</sup>

On June 11th, 1903, F. C. Harriott, Clara Morris' husband, wrote to Oliver D. Street that his wife was "no believer in the story of Booth's substitution and of his only recent death." He stated that when her "Life on the Stage" appeared, with a chapter on Booth,<sup>49</sup> a person in the South wrote to say that Booth was still alive and to ask an audience with Miss Morris in New York on a given day. "I answered his note by saying that the audience would be given, but no one appeared." . . . Harriott added: "We take no stock in the occasional sensations pertaining to David George or others."

Bates tells of an interview he says he had at Memphis in February 1903 with Junius Brutus Booth III. Born on January 6th, 1868, this Junius Brutus had never seen his Uncle John.

<sup>47</sup> "Escape"; pp. 168-169.

<sup>48</sup> June 3, 1903; p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> New York, 1901. The chapter was first printed in *McClure's Magazine*, Feb. 1901; pp. 299-304.



After Bates had sought him out, he gave what Bates is pleased to term a "voluntary statement." Even after possible editing by Bates, the statement amounts to no more than that, having examined a portrait (ostensibly the St. Helen tintype) which Bates showed him, Junius Brutus III thought he saw in it a certain resemblance to John and to others of the Booths.

## 6.

Bates gives many anecdotes that seem to confirm his theory—until they are analyzed! One romantic gentleman said (according to Bates) that at his house in Mississippi, in the dusk of an evening of 1869, "an erratic fellow" arrived who said he was a Ku Klux Klansman and had been run out of Arkansas by the militia. To his sure knowledge Booth had escaped to Mexico, where he had fought in Maximilian's army and then roved about disguised as a *padre*. Bates identified this Klansman with John St. Helen. But Maximilian was active in the field from February to May 15th, 1867; and at that time St. Helen was presumed to have been at Nebraska City or on his trek from there to San Francisco. According to Bates himself, St. Helen said that *after leaving* San Francisco he "went into Mexico."<sup>50</sup>

Among Bates' many affidavits, one from N. C. Newman contained details so important that it is strange St. Helen omitted them. Newman said that his mother was a half-sister of Mary Ann (Holmes) Booth, John Booth's mother; and that Booth after his escape from Garrett's, had come to the Newman home at Friendville, Kentucky, on Raccoon Creek, and had been cared for there. Bates' St. Helen had said he had remained for a week as a "wounded Confederate soldier" with "a widow lady and her young son" who lived fifty or sixty miles southwest of Warfield (in eastern Kentucky) but "whose name I can not now remember." It seems incredible that Booth could have forgotten his mother's half-sister's married name. And the place where the Newmans lived cannot be identified, for no Friendville in Kentucky appears in atlases of 1865.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> "Escape"; p. 58.

<sup>51</sup> *Ib.*; p. 57. Bernie Babcock cites the "affidavit" in her fictional "Booth and the Spirit of Lincoln," and says she examined the original in Memphis. Other equally reliable "affidavits" were in "the Bates collection."

Were John St. Helen and David E. George the same person? On the face of it, it seems improbable. It is far more improbable that John Booth was metamorphosed into St. Helen, the "typical saloon desperado" of the Texan *Hinterland*, or into George, the boozy house painter and loafer of Oklahoma.

The St. Helen of 1872, as Granbury folk knew him, bore no resemblance to the John Booth who had been so colorful and distinctive only seven or eight years before. A. P. Gordon of Granbury (once St. Helen's employer) calls St. Helen in 1872 a man at least forty. Booth would have been well under thirty-five. Perhaps Booth and St. Helen were alike in medium height, welter-weight figure, dark hair, and pendent mustache.<sup>52</sup> But features and planes of the face were quite different. St. Helen's hair was not so wavy, had not the "inky blackness" of Booth's tragic head. His ears, eyes, chin were unlike Booth's. The vital spirit that lives in Booth's most casual photographs was lacking. St. Helen had none of the gifts that had made Booth eminent upon the stage when he was but twenty-five; none of the graces that made Booth remembered as "so bright, so gay, so kind."

Said Editor Frank Gaston of Granbury: "No one around here at that time [the 'seventies] thought St. Helen so strange and different, but, of course, many after they heard he might be John Wilkes Booth thought him *quite* different." A quarter-century later, George is even more unconvincing. "It is rather funny," said C. R. Miller, druggist of El Reno, "but while George was here he was known only as an old drunken painter, but as soon as the story got around that he might be John Wilkes Booth all the people that had ever seen him were telling how he quoted Shakespeare and how dramatic he had been. It seemed that then all knew there was something different about Old Man George."

Neither George nor St. Helen really carried any air of the stage. A. P. Gordon, at one time St. Helen's employer in Granbury, said that St. Helen "never to my knowledge took part in any plays or entertainments."

In December 1931 United Press reports described a clinical

<sup>52</sup> We do not know the actual date of the tintype. Bates says 1877, but apparently St. Helen left Granbury long before that.

study of the mummy by a group of seven physicians in Chicago. X-rays and electric dissecting saws discovered a dislocated *left* thumb, a broken *fibula* (which leg not specified), and a portion of a signet ring engraved with what was possibly the letter *B*.<sup>53</sup> The physician directing the work announced: "I can say safely that we believe Booth's body is here in my office." To this physician, Dr. Orlando Scott, the present writer later sent a few queries. From his answers it seems certain that he looked for no identifying marks other than those mentioned in Bates' "Escape."

In 1938 two national weeklies carried articles and pictures about "the mummy that might be Booth"—an object in contrast with which P. T. Barnum's "Feejee Mermaid" achieves in retrospect a kind of dignity.<sup>54</sup> The myth persists.

## 7.

After David E. George's suicide and while Enid was making holiday, Tom Hensley of the El Reno *Democrat* had two letters from the East. One was signed by Laura Ida Booth, who claimed George as her father; the other was from Laura Ida's brother. Hensley heard no more from the brother; but from Laura Ida he received a number of letters about the estate of the deceased. There was, as we have learned, no estate—and Laura Ida's interest waned. Laura Ida was a vaudeville performer who had before this given out that she was a daughter of John Wilkes Booth, and apparently had at times been thus billed in the South.

More than twenty years afterward—in November 1926—the brother burst into print. McCager W. Payne, a half-brother of Laura Ida, was employed as a guard at a cotton mill in Fayetteville, Tennessee. To the Booth survival tale he added many new particulars.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Bates mentions ("Escape"; p. 262) a high thumb-joint on the *right* hand.

<sup>54</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*, Feb. 19, 1938; pp. 16, 17, 84. *Life*, July 11, 1938; pp. 4, 5, 7. The pictures there shown may be compared with that facing p. 276 of Bates' volume.—The *Post* article said (p. 38) that the mummy had been exhibited on the campus of Northwestern University at Evanston. President Walter Dill Scott denied this in a letter to the present writer.

<sup>55</sup> An interview with him by Robert Hunt occupied nearly a page (p. 3) of the Nashville *Tennessean* for Nov. 14, 1926. This had portraits of Laura Ida and McCager. Mr. Hunt, later connected with the editorial department of the Nashville



His mother, Payne said, had been Louisa J. Price, daughter of a Cumberland Presbyterian minister. She was first married to Z. C. Payne, a young grocer who served in the Civil War and died in 1871. After that for a time she made her living as a needlewoman at Sewanee, where she worked for the students of the University of the South. At Sewanee she became acquainted with a handsome cabinetmaker named John W. Booth, who told her he was a "distant cousin" of the actor who had shot Lincoln.

The stranger, according to McCager (who was eight years old when his father died), was "black haired, with hair of the kind that curls easily if allowed to grow to any length." He had "very dark eyes and a black mustache, slightly curled at the tips." He weighed "about 145 pounds"; he was "always well dressed." Though he got along well enough at his trade, his "dainty hands" might have been thought out of keeping with it, and he was distinctly "a theatrical man."

He entertained students Saturday nights with sleight of hand and readings from plays—when he was "moody," from tragedies. He liked attention at home or in public; and asked no fee for his performances. He was "as clever and tricky a hand with cards as ever shuffled a pack," and so supple that he could bend backward with a pin in his mouth and stick the pin into the floor.

On February 25th, 1872, Louisa Payne and John W. Booth were married at Sewanee by C. C. Rose, a justice of the peace.<sup>56</sup> One evening, as he was dressing for his *soirée*, John W. turned abruptly to his wife, pointed to "some scars on his leg," and asked:

"Miss Lou, do you know what made those knots? *I got them in a fall on the stage of Ford's Theatre when I killed Abraham Lincoln!*"

Soon the cabinetmaker began to talk of a fortune that was to be his—the \$100,000 put up by the group that planned Lincoln's death. The man killed at Garrett's was really, he said, a cousin—

*Banner*, kindly sent to the present writer a copy of the story as originally printed. Extracts from it were given in the *Literary Digest* for Dec. 25, 1926 (pp. 40-41), under the heading "When Did John Wilkes Booth Die?"

<sup>56</sup> The *Tennessean* published a half-tone cut of the record, from a photograph by a member of its staff. The license was issued by the county clerk of Franklin County on Feb. 24. Robert Hunt said that the license stands recorded in the clerk's office at Winchester.



mistaken for him. He himself "hid in a log all night" before venturing southward.

Louisa and John W. and the boy left Sewanee on July 1st, 1872. In Memphis John W. took a laborer's job in a cottonseed oil mill and rented dingy rooms at a cheap hotel. Peering through the curtains, Louisa came to recognize the members of a suspicious-looking gang, some of whom were forever slouching past her windows. Then one day she overheard them say, "That's where he lives, the dirty skunk." "Run," she called to McCager, "run tell your pa there's men here to kill him!"

When the boy reached the mill, John W. sent word back to Louisa that "transportation would be awaiting her within the hour." They moved to a boarding-house in southwestern Memphis; and for a space they breathed freely. Then once more the slouching figures passed to and fro. There was a desperate return to the former lodgings. One night John W. did not come home, and Louisa hurried to the offices of the mill. Yes, they said, he had taken his pay check from the cashier. Before he had left the window, two men had approached him. They had bowed and tipped their caps; John W. had returned the salute. Louisa and McCager never saw him again.

With assistance from a church in Memphis, the two went back to Sewanee. Louisa opened a steam laundry. McCager's half-sister was born, and was named Laura Ida Elizabeth "after a sister of Booth and a sister of her mother." Following Louisa's death, McCager and Laura Ida lived with an aunt. Then Laura Ida, only fourteen, ran away with the John Robinson circus and became a trapeze artiste. She married Charles Levine, went with him to England; and had a son. After Levine's death she married Artman Driver, professionally known as Art Norman, with whom she played several vaudeville circuits. She died in 1925, at the reputed age of fifty-three. A *petite* creature, "she retained her youth remarkably and passed for a much younger woman, in makeup looking much like a girl."<sup>57</sup> In 1920 she and her husband appeared at Loew's Theatre in Memphis (home town of Finis Bates, who was then living) as "Norman and Jeannette" in an act called "Bits of Versatility."

<sup>57</sup> Robert Hunt in the *Tennessean*.

McCager told his interviewer that in 1903 he heard from an uncle, Jerome F. Payne, about David George's suicide at Enid, Oklahoma, and of George's claim to be John Booth. Then McCager wrote to Tom Hensley of El Reno. Laura Ida (said McCager) went to Enid with Finis L. Bates of Memphis but declined to join McCager in a suit for a large tract of land belonging to George, for she thought "a 50-50 attorney's fee was too high." McCager in 1926 was still convinced, however, that a fortune—maybe more than \$100,000—awaited him. Unfortunately he had not the means to press his claim at law.

In 1872 John W. Booth of Tennessee was a cabinetmaker in Sewanee, was married there on February 25th, and did not leave until July 1st. So he could not have been St. Helen, who was in Texas in 1872.<sup>58</sup> He could hardly have been George in any case—at least on the basis of the interview with McCager Payne.

In 1935 William H. Smathers, United States senator from New Jersey, was approached by Charles Wilson Asburn of Atlantic City, "a grandson of Booth," in an attempt to get title to "valuable Oklahoma oil lands which Booth was said to have owned." Asburn gave Smathers "letters which identified him as the son of Mrs. Art Norman, a vaudeville actress, who was identified as Booth's daughter before her death in 1924 [?]." Smathers learned that previous to Laura Ida's death Roy J. Wilson, a lawyer in Tennessee, had looked into her claim to Oklahoma lands but had found that "Booth" had "willed his estate to a Catholic institution whose claim is invulnerable."<sup>59</sup>

Though he decided that "the title could not be challenged," Wilson had nevertheless for years believed that Booth "was not slain by his pursuers" but escaped to Tennessee, where he was

<sup>58</sup> Bates says that in "the spring of 1872" St. Helen was at Glen Rose ("Escape"; p. 7).

<sup>59</sup> See the *New York Post*, Apr. 15, 1935; p. 20. The "lands in Oklahoma" are presumably the seven hundred acres that David E. George did not own but bequeathed to an imaginary nephew. The will read: "I further provide that in the event that my said nephew is not alive then I give, devise and bequeath all of said tract of land or so much thereof as may be granted to me by the Government to the Sisters of Charity of Dallas, Texas" (Dec. 31, 1902). The Mother Superior at Dallas, in answer to an inquiry, said nothing was known there of any David E. George; adding, "We do not think we are the Sisters interested." (Campbell's "Escape and Wanderings"; p. 50.)

married to a "Miss" Payne. Wilson wrote to Smathers: "I have proof for the most skeptical that Booth committed suicide at Enid, Okla., in 1904 [?]." Was Finis Bates the source of Wilson's proof?

Even while this volume was being prepared for the press, a new Booth escape story appeared in a letter to the New York *Sun* (January 24th, 1940.) The letter, signed A. L. Q. and dated New York, January 23rd, told of a Mr. Smythe who

... lived three or four doors from Mrs. Surratt in Washington. At Mr. Smythe's house, Mr. Booth, Dr. Mudd and many other wealthy and loyal Southerners met and discussed the plot.

The Southern gentlemen all owned and rode horses. Mr. Booth's and Mr. Smythe's horses were identical. On the night that President Lincoln was shot a Negro held Mr. Booth's horse—not far from the stage door of the theater—and Mr. Smythe's horse stood saddled, bridled and untied at Mr. Smythe's door all the evening.

When word came that the President was shot Mr. Smythe jumped on his horse and dashed off in the opposite direction from that planned for Mr. Booth.

Mr. Smythe's children—a boy of 6 or 7 years, and a girl of 9 years—were taken to New York to their uncle on Sixty-second street, near Third avenue, by different routes and his wife followed. They lived in seclusion there for many years, waiting for the father and husband, but he never came.

He was the man who was shot in the barn, whose horse was traced, as had been planned, and who hoped to deter pursuit.

Mr. Smythe's children were my playmates on Sixty-second street. We were told by them all about their flight from Washington, and about Dr. Mudd. Mr. Booth and Mr. Smythe were both dark, handsome men with long black mustaches. One was scarcely distinguishable from the other. My parents lived in the nearest house to the uncle, Mr. Smythe, on Sixty-second street. His house is a four-story brick house, the only original house still standing on the north side, about the eighth house from Third avenue. It was owned by a Mr. McClusky.

A detailed and ingenious story—with not only "scarcely distinguishable" men but "identical" horses! Here is "a Negro" holding John Booth's horse "not far from the stage door" of Ford's, whereas "Peanuts" Burroughs is known to have held the animal at the *back* door. The only "Mr. Smythe" in the Washington directory for 1865 is Perrence Smythe, carpenter, residing not on H Street (where Mrs. Surratt lived) but at 398 Twentieth Street



(west); and in the New York directory for 1864-1865 and 1865-1866 there appears to be no entry under Q on East 62nd Street. But even if there were a Smythe on H Street and a Q— (Quackenbush, Quantrell, Quincy?) on East 62nd Street (then in a region of scattered houses without numbers), that still would not prove that Booth survived.

## 8.

John Booth had been one of America's most eligible bachelors, and ladies of many sorts had been interested in him. From the tale of his survival was developed as a natural corollary the notion that he married. The Booth of the far Pelew Islands introduced to his friend Carroll Jackson Donelson a "female" who knew all but counted the world well lost. In the rectory of Armstrong-Booth, the picturesque clergyman of Richmond and Atlanta, dwelt a wife who clung to him despite his alleged rhetorical warning that on his hands was the blood of Lincoln. Louisa J. (Price) Payne, wedded to John W. Booth, Tennessean cabinetmaker and card sharp, followed him blindly, even after he owned to murder.

On December 5th, 1885, the New York *Tribune* in a front-page dispatch from Boston said:

It is not generally known that Booth at the time of his death left a widow and two children, yet such appears to be the fact.

The *Tribune* then told that an anonymous Bostonian "who professes to be well acquainted with the widow" had recently sent to her a newspaper item "to the effect that some person in Alabama had published a book in which he attempted to show that John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln, was still alive." With the item went a note to the widow suggesting that "anything she might write" by way of comment "would prove interesting to the public." Her reply (as quoted by the *Tribune*) said:

An item has just come to my notice of some man, unknown, in Birmingham, Ala., who has a desire to resurrect John Wilkes Booth. Whoever this man may be, let me warn the public that his only motive must be to make money; for as sure as the sun shines in the heavens,



so sure is John Wilkes Booth dead. I myself saw him buried, saw and examined his body before it was laid in its final resting-place. He carried marks upon his body known only to his family and intimate friends, and these marks were identified by his family. We all know that the last act of his life was wrong. We also know we should not judge. We know not the why or wherefore, but it is my opinion that those of us who live long enough will yet learn that, although it was John W. Booth's hands that struck the fatal blow that ended a good man's life, yet it was those in high authority who were the head of a diabolical conspiracy, Andrew Johnson leader, the result of which steeped several families in the deepest of woe, and left a nation to mourn. Although not generally known, J. W. Booth left a family; a wife and two children, a daughter and a son, now grown to womanhood and manhood. This family has lived in seclusion and under a false name for twenty years. For these innocent ones' sakes, let their dead alone and let them sorrow in peace. I beg for the sake of the Booth family, now mourning over the death of the mother of J. Wilkes Booth,<sup>60</sup> that the public will show some little charity and leave the wrongs that some one has done in the hands of a higher Power, who, in His own good time, will make all things right. Let the dead rest for the sake of the living and the innocent.

The detached, impersonal tone of this, its worn phrases and hollow piety, make a curious impression. Though she argues that "the why or wherefore" of Booth's deed was unknown and that we "should not judge," the writer presupposes a faction of "those in high authority," with Andrew Johnson at its head, guiding "a diabolical conspiracy." A point of interest is the assurance that John Booth *is really dead*. Note that the widow speaks of "the last act of his life." Any survival tale is here expressly denied.

Shortly after the appearance of this front-page story in the *Tribune*, with its headline THE WIDOW OF J. WILKES BOOTH, Edwin Booth, in a letter to his friend Laurence Hutton, wrote indignantly:

The *Tribune* contains a d—nable lie about John—this "widow" is one of several that wrote to me from different cities—just after his death, one of whom—this one, I suspect, got hold of poor Rose & robbed her of all the money she had. This is the beginning of another blackmail scheme, of which I had some intimation from a Boston lawyer some months ago. That horrible business will never be buried—it

<sup>60</sup> Mary Ann (Holmes) Booth died in 1885, having survived her husband thirty-three years.

seems to be one of the Tribune's favorite topics; I frequently see allusions to it in that paper.<sup>61</sup>

These words straight from the heart of John Booth's famous brother throw a convincing ray of light upon a singular phase of the Great American Myth. The "widow" subsided from the first page and apparently, so far as concerned the news-reading public, was allowed to "sorrow in peace." Possibly Edwin Booth or his sister Rose (who died in 1889) continued to be made aware of her.

Laura Ida Elizabeth Booth of Tennessee, circus aërialist and vaudevillian, was not John Booth's only alleged daughter. In 1890, newspaper correspondence from Columbus, Ohio, described "an actress whose name and family connection impart a great degree of interest in her," then at the Globe Theatre with the Boston Comic Opera Company (not to be confused with "The Bostonians").

Her maiden name was Rita Booth, but she is now the wife of Mr. Henderson, the director of the company. Mrs. Booth-Henderson says she is the daughter of J. Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Lincoln. She remembers her father distinctly, although but 8 years old at the time of his death. She was asked concerning the truth or falsity of the recently published statement of some woman living in the South, to the effect that her father was not dead, but that another man had been shot on that eventful morning more than twenty-five years ago. She emphatically affirmed that her father is dead, that he was shot at that time, and that she saw his body a number of times before the burial.

Mrs. Henderson says her mother died about three years since, leaving her as the only child, yet she says she has two half-brothers living. She was born in Richmond, Va., and has been on the stage more or less for the past fifteen years. She was the leading lady with George C. Miln, the preacher-actor, a few years since, and later with Grace Hawthorne. She made her first appearance on the stage at the Boston Globe Theatre in a minor part. She first appeared in this city at the old Comstock, now Metropolitan House, about seven years ago with Palmer in "The Danites." She appeared later with the Bennett and Moulton Opera company at the Grand four years ago.

Mrs. Booth-Henderson has many of the characteristic features so marked in the Booth family, and her facial resemblance, as well as her love for the stage, would seem to be strong evidence of the statement

<sup>61</sup> In the Hutton Collection at Princeton University.

she makes. She says she has a diary containing much important memoranda of her father's life, and papers of his, and some time she will make them public.<sup>62</sup>

Mrs. Henderson's acquaintances in the profession were familiar with her claim to be John Booth's daughter, and knew she sometimes wore a breastpin or brooch holding a portrait head of John Booth. She was married to Al Henderson, an orchestra leader in road companies, and often the two were able to get engagements together. Her name was really Ogarita. On April 12th, 1892, she died at Binghamton, New York, where she was appearing as a member of the Floy Crowell company. "She was born about 1858, we believe," remarked the *Clipper*, "and her mother is said to have been a once noted actress in the Boston Museum stock in the old days." <sup>63</sup>

On the 15th the *Times* and *World* of New York carried sketches.<sup>64</sup> The *World* termed her "a clever character actress," and added that she "often declared that she did not wish to rise to any eminence in the dramatic profession, because she feared her relationship would bring unpleasant notoriety." "Several people who knew Booth," said the *World*, "claim to have noted in her the clear-cut features, the big ox eyes, the curly hair and high brow." <sup>65</sup>

Both the *Times* and the *Clipper* had her leaving "a child" of about seven; the *World* said, "Two children, one a girl of thirteen, survive her"; the *Recorder*, two, "one a girl of 12." The *World* quoted the opinion of "a theatrical man" that the "history of Mrs. Henderson's mother would be an interesting one"—and said: "It was stated at the Players' Club last night that Edwin Booth was not at home."

Late in 1937 John Booth's marriage was the theme of an over-written and chaotic volume of five hundred pages, "This One Mad Act," "the unknown story of John Wilkes Booth and his family

<sup>62</sup> From a clipping in the John T. Ford Collection.

<sup>63</sup> Apr. 23, 1892; p. 110. The New York *Recorder* of Apr. 15 said (p. 2), that she was "about 35 years old."

<sup>64</sup> *Times*, p. 5; *World*, p. 1 (with portrait).

<sup>65</sup> *βοῶπις*—a classic touch for a Manhattan sheet. Truth is, the Booth eye was rather heavy-lidded and Oriental.



—by his granddaughter.” The author was a Mrs. Mann Page (formerly Mrs. Reuben Merrifield), who had been a staff writer for newspapers and under the name Izola Forrester had written books for girls. In “This One Mad Act” she presented herself as the daughter of Rita (Ogarita) Booth and George W. Hills, Rita’s first husband; and as the adopted daughter of George Forrester of Chicago, whose name she legally assumed in January 1893.

The sprawling, repetitious form of the narrative, with its blunders, irrelevancies, and loose-jointed structure, may have been deliberate. For there are occasional passages of no little charm (mainly in the earlier chapters), and throughout are the ease and fluency of one who has been used to filling space.

“This One Mad Act” introduces to us a grandmother who was born either in London (p. 172) or on board ship off Martha’s Vineyard during a storm (p. 10). The date of her birth, as given by herself, is quoted as September 11th, 1839 (p. 172); but the date of her death is given (p. 44) as November 9th, 1887, and it is said (p. 49) that she was then in her fifty-first year. She was (pp. 5, 10) the child of Abram Mills, a Yankee sea captain, and Izola Maria Mendosa of Cordoba. (But on p. 172 she says the mother’s name was Violetta.) Reared in Baltimore by her aunt, Mrs. Henry D’Arcy, she was known as Izola Martha Mills and as Izola Martha D’Arcy. She also called herself Izola Violetta Miller, Oriana Collier, Eleanore St. Clare, and Hero Strong (pp. 46, 106, 174).

In 1858 at a fancy-dress ball in Richmond Izola Martha D’Arcy, glittering in white silk and diamonds, met John Booth, then, according to “This One Mad Act,” leading man of the Richmond Theatre’s stock company. It was on both sides a case of love at first sight. Though the aunt’s husband violently opposed the match, they soon were married. John continued to act in Richmond, but established a retreat for his wife in the Valley of the Shenandoah. There, on October 23rd, 1859, Ogarita Rosalie (Rita) Booth was born. After Lincoln’s murder, Izola Martha Booth, in May 1865, fled with the daughter and found shelter in the Baltimore home of John H. Stevenson, who had been a friend of John Booth’s.



In the fall of 1868 she journeyed to California to meet Booth!

From California she returned to Baltimore, where on February 27th, 1870, her child Harry was born—that is, the author of “This One Mad Act” thus gives place and date, but the record in Izola Martha’s Bible named February 27th, 1871, as the date and Boston as the place. By 1871 Izola Martha *was* in Boston.<sup>66</sup> The narrative then grows more vague. There are scattered references to photographs of Izola Martha in the rôles of Isabella (“Measure for Measure”), Lady Macbeth, and Medea; to photographs of her friends in the stock company of the Boston Museum; to Izola Martha’s theatric ways and speech. She is pictured coaching Rita for the part of the Lady Anne in “Richard III.” Everybody is supposed to have accepted the fact that she had been of the stage.

In 1882 she removed to Canterbury, Connecticut. There she queened it, aloof, serene, always with means to suit her needs—a mystery to her country neighbors. She lived in a mansion called Terrace Hall, with great windows, silver-handled doors, a cupola, and a ballroom with a theater in it.

Harry emerges in small parts in Boston—carries a spear in a production of “Othello” by the elder Salvini; then drifts to New York, a character after O. Henry’s own heart. Improvident, devil-may-care, he sings in saloons and all-night restaurants, passes the hat. He is known to all the hangers-on from the Battery to Harlem, is friend alike of Chuck Connors or of Oscar Hammerstein. At Kid McCoy’s place a Southerner tells him he looks like John Booth—he bows and says there must be a mistake. In the summer he entertains at resort hotels or turns to small-time vaudeville. He dies in 1918, taking from the world the visible evidence that John Booth did not die at Garrett’s.

Who did? The substitute this time was a nameless fellow-knight of the Golden Circle. He parleyed with the soldiers while Booth escaped. He purposed to surrender, but before he could do so, he was killed by a “wild shot.” All who aided John Booth had been members of the Golden Circle, bound by oath to respond to his call. A group photograph of Knights of the Golden Circle proves

<sup>66</sup> The Bible, it seems, had Mar. 23, 1870, as the date of a marriage to John H. Stevenson—to protect Izola Martha by letting her have his name.

manifestly to be of Knights Templar—but the discrepancy is lightly brushed aside. We are asked to see John Booth in the rear center, no matter what knights they are.

The inconsistencies between this unfoldment and the statement of the “widow” who in December 1885 addressed the public through the *Tribune* are evident. But there likewise are inconsistencies between it and the statement by Rita Booth in 1890.

- (a) If Rita was born on October 23rd, 1859, she was not *eight* years old in April 1865, but about five-and-a-half.
- (b) If Booth escaped, Rita must have been mistaken in supposing that he was mortally wounded and that she saw his body “a number of times.”
- (c) If Harry, born in 1870 (or 1871) and living until 1918, was really “child of the escape,” Rita was wrong in saying that in 1887 (when her mother died) she was the only child.
- (d) If Rita was born in the Shenandoah Valley, she was incorrect in giving Richmond as her birthplace.

What happened to John Booth? A Colonel Young said that one Jimmy Kelley (whose name proved to be Wells), an actor friend of John's, had received from John a series of letters written at Bombay. But the letters have vanished. Wells told Colonel Young (so said the Colonel) that John's letters ceased in 1879, and that John died at Bombay in that year.

It would be a lengthy task to point out in detail all that is wrong in “This One Mad Act.” But we can take one of the main threads of the story and have a look at its credibility.

Let us begin with Augustin Daly. “This One Mad Act” states that he was in Chicago in 1894 and there said that after Lincoln's murder those who had known John Booth at all well were in danger; that Junius Brutus II and John S. Clarke were arrested; and that within a few years Edwin was shot at while playing in Cincinnati. So it is not surprising (according to Daly in “This One Mad Act”) that Izola Martha's whereabouts around that period were uncertain, for she had been in hiding. She had been married to Booth in the North, Daly explained, probably because Edwin Booth recently had bought a house at Cos Cob, Connecticut, and the house was unoccupied because Edwin was at that

time in Australia. Daly is also said to have left an order for three complimentary seats for "Much Ado about Nothing," then running in Chicago with Ada Rehan and Mrs. Gilbert in the cast.

Of course, Daly could not have said these things. He knew that Edwin Booth was shot at not in Cincinnati but in Chicago, at McVicker's Theatre; and not within a few years but on April 23rd, 1879, fourteen years after Lincoln's murder. The shooting was done by Mark Gray, a young clerk from St. Louis, whose grievance was that Edwin "was an obstacle in the way of his attainment of histrionic glory."<sup>67</sup> It had not the remotest connection with what John had done.

The year 1894 has been called by his brother, Judge Daly, "one of the hardest working years" in Augustin Daly's life.<sup>68</sup> Daly, after a long absence in England, was busy in New York. At the end of September two of his companies went on the road for brief tours. Miss Rehan, who did not arrive from England until August, headed one company, which gave "As You Like It," "The Last Word," "Love on Crutches," "The School for Scandal," "The Taming of the Shrew," and "Twelfth Night." Mrs. Gilbert was not with Miss Rehan but in the "company of comedians," which also included James Lewis, Henry Dixey, William Gilbert, Percy Haswell, and Laura Hansen. Miss Rehan's first performance of Beatrice in "Much Ado about Nothing" was at Daly's Theatre in New York on the snowy night of December 23rd, 1896. Hence she could not have been appearing in that rôle under Daly's management at Chicago in 1894.<sup>69</sup>

Why, at the height of the midwinter theatrical season, would John Booth, member of the Richmond Theatre's stock company, travel to Cos Cob, Connecticut, to be married? The officiating clergyman—according to the book—was the Rev. Peleg Weaver of the Methodist Protestant Church at North Cos Cob. Peleg Weaver was a striking figure. Both of his arms had been blown away in an explosion and he wore cork arms; but he was able to turn the leaves of his pulpit Bible with his mouth. He was not, however, at

<sup>67</sup> Winter, "Life and Art of Edwin Booth"; p. 128. New York *Tribune*, Apr. 24, 1879; p. 1—Apr. 25; p. 1—Apr. 26; p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> J. F. Daly, "The Life of Augustin Daly"; p. 580.

<sup>69</sup> Winter, "Ada Rehan: A Study"; p. 165. Programmes and box-office records in the Daly Collection, Brander Matthews Dramatic Museum, Columbia University.



North Cos Cob in 1859; it was not until 1871 that he became pastor of the "Horse Neck Society" of the Methodist Protestant Church there.<sup>70</sup>

In 1859, and for years thereafter, Edwin Booth had no house in Cos Cob to lend to his brother. On August 16th, 1867, farm land along the shore at Studwell's Point was bought for \$3,600 from Edward Mead of Greenwich by Charles M. Barras, theatrical agent and manager, a translator and adapter of plays, and author of "The Black Crook," which made such a stir at Niblo's Garden in 1866. It was Barras' "fine marine villa" Cedar Cliff (built on the Mead land), with the something more than eight acres around it, that Edwin Booth bought for his second wife, Mary McVicker, on August 13th, 1872.<sup>71</sup>

Furthermore, Edwin Booth in January 1859 was not in Australia but in the United States. It was in 1854 he visited Australia, Laura Keane being in the company. A letter written by him from London on December 12th, 1880, gives an account of his life and career. In it he says: "Went as a 'star' to Australia 1854—managed the Royal Hawaiian theatre, Honolulu, Sandwich Islands in 1855. In '56 began a series of professional tours through the United States." <sup>72</sup>

The whole recital of John Booth's alleged marriage as given in "This One Mad Act" is incredible. Although there would have been no reason for concealment, the Booth family knew nothing of any such marriage. No such marriage is to be found recorded among marriages in Greenwich township from 1855 to 1865. Neither church records nor personal records of the Rev. Peleg Weaver are offered in proof, and there seems to be no marriage

<sup>70</sup> S. P. Mead, "Ye Historie of Ye Town of Greenwich"; pp. 435-437.—In a letter to the present writer, the Rev. Roby F. Day stated that the Memorial Roll of the Eastern Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church shows that the Rev. Peleg Weaver united with the New York Conference in 1853 and died in 1882. "This One Mad Act" has Mr. Forrester in 1904 searching in "old records" at "the headquarters of the Methodist Episcopal Church" in New York. The Rev. Mr. Weaver's church was the Methodist Protestant, whose headquarters were in Baltimore.

<sup>71</sup> Mary Frances McVicker (*née* Runnion) was married to Edwin Booth at Long Branch in 1869. He had married Mary Devlin in July 1860. She died in February 1863.—Greenwich Land Record, vol. 33, p. 365; vol. 40, pp. 300-301; vol. 45, pp. 48-49. Edwin sold the property in 1876. The house was razed in 1940.

<sup>72</sup> Original in the Robinson Locke Collection, New York Public Library.



certificate extant. Izola Martha is supposed to have had a wedding ring with the initials *J.W.B.*—but it was interred with her. After the mysterious loss or destruction of so many pages of Izola Martha's "diaries," those remaining cannot aid us much. One (as reproduced in the book) carries an allusion to the Rev. Mr. Weaver's kindness *after the death* of the alleged husband. And Rita Booth "emphatically affirmed" that the death occurred in 1865.

A home in the Shenandoah Valley region in 1859 would have been most inconvenient for a stock-company player in Richmond. Time-tables of that day show that to go from Richmond to Woodstock, by way of Gordonsville and Manassas Junction, required the use of three railways and took over eleven hours. Besides, John Booth was not the leading man of the Richmond Theatre stock company. He was doing small parts and not even using the Booth name.

Among the anecdotes in "This One Mad Act" that are employed to bolster its thesis is one about the well-known actor Wilfred Clarke, son of Asia Booth Clarke, John Booth's sister. Once in London, it is said, the grandmother, Mrs. J. B. Booth (Mary Holmes Booth) was driving with Asia, John McCullough, Edwin, and Wilfred, when suddenly, as a man approached, the grandmother screamed and Edwin cried, "My God, it's John!" Edwin got out and talked with the man. The grandmother also attempted to do so but was prevented by McCullough.

Mr. Clarke kindly explained to the present writer that the grandmother was not present, that no one screamed, that Edwin did not cry, "My God, it's John!" The man called Edwin "Ned"; and Mr. Clarke took him to be some actor whom Uncle Edwin knew. The genesis of the falsified report Mr. Clarke traced to Blanche Booth (Blanche De Bar.) She had told him that in 1902 in Oklahoma a man stood in the corridor outside her hotel room and called to her. She thought him a "stagedoor Johnnie," but after he had gone she fell to thinking that the voice was the voice of John Booth. "I then told her my story," said Mr. Clarke, "to prove how easily one could be mistaken. I never dreamed that she

would give it to a newspaper and in such a garbled manner.”<sup>73</sup>

A variant of Blanche's story is that the stranger thrust under the door a card on which was written the name John Wilkes Booth. Perhaps he was D. E. George.<sup>74</sup> William Seymour, who knew Blanche De Bar and corresponded with her, stated<sup>75</sup> that she was the daughter of J. B. Booth II and Clementina De Bar, sister of Ben De Bar. The New York *Mirror* in an obituary sketch of J. B. Booth II said:<sup>76</sup> “The published statement that Blanche De Bar is his daughter is untrue. That lady is not related to the Booth family except by the marriage of her mother.”

The author of “This One Mad Act” always refers to Blanche De Bar as Blanche *Dis* De Bar Booth, and speaks of Ben *Dis* De Bar. This comes from a strange confusion with the name of Ann O'Delia Diss De Bar, used by a fraudulent spirit medium, known also as Ann O'Delia Salomon and Editha Lolita Montez. This woman was sentenced in New York City in May 1888 to a term of six months in the penitentiary for conspiring to defraud the wealthy Luther R. Marsh of his property. The affair was a local *cause célèbre*.

9.

An especially persistent falsehood has connected the names of John Booth and John Y. Beall. In September 1864, Beall—represented to be an officer in the navy of the Confederate States—was involved with one Bennett Burley in an attempt to free the 2,500 Confederate prisoners on Johnson's Island in Lake Erie. Supplied with horses and arms, most of the escaped men were to fight their way across Ohio to Wheeling and thence into Virginia. Others would capture the *Michigan*, stationed at Johnson's Island and the only naval vessel that the treaty with Canada permitted on the Great Lakes, and would then proceed to burn Sandusky, Cleveland, and Buffalo. The foolish plot came to nothing and on February 24th, 1865, Beall was hanged on Governor's Island in New York Harbor as a spy and guerrilla. A number of distinguished

<sup>73</sup> From a written statement by Mr. Clarke.

<sup>74</sup> See Babcock, “Booth and the Spirit of Lincoln”; p. 287 and note.

<sup>75</sup> New York *Tribune*, Jan. 13, 1917; p. 8.

<sup>76</sup> Sept. 22, 1883; p. 6.



#### SOUVENIRS OF JOHN BOOTH

*(Left)* Gold head of the light walking-stick so often carried by him and shown in photographs of him. It is heavily chased and bears in a cartouche the inscription: Neil Bryant to J. W. Booth. *(Right)* Ring of antique dull gold, with initials J. W. B. engraved on both sides of it. The ring has been broken—apparently to remove it from the finger.

Originally owned by Dr. J. A. Booth, these came into the possession of Mr. C. F. Dahlen, by whose courtesy they have been photographed





Northerners appealed to the President to save Beall from the gallows, but this was a case in which Lincoln absolutely refused to interfere.

Beall's execution has been called the cause of Lincoln's murder. Booth and Beall, it was said, had been schoolmates (or fellow-students at the University of Virginia) and inseparable comrades—some versions had it that the two were cousins and that Booth was devoted to Beall's sister Lily. The story went that the night before Beall's execution, Booth, with Senator Hale, John W. Forney, and Washington McLean, drove at midnight to the Executive Mansion. The President was awakened and Booth, kneeling before him and clasping his knees, pleaded for Beall's life. Moved to tears, Lincoln took Booth's hands and promised to pardon Beall. Nevertheless Beall was hanged, for Seward threatened to resign if Lincoln granted the pardon.

In fact, Booth and Beall never met. John W. Forney declared that he never met Booth and that the story of the midnight call was a lie. Booth never attended the University of Virginia. So far as we can tell, he was never in the Executive Mansion. And he wrote in the famous diary: "I knew no private wrong. I struck for my country and that alone."

Isaac Markens, who devoted years to the study of this matter, exposed the story's falsity in his "President Lincoln and the Case of John Y. Beall" (1911). But several years later Lyon G. Tyler of Virginia renewed the discredited charge that Booth shot Lincoln because Lincoln "had hung that great and noble Confederate naval officer, John Y. Beall, against all civilized rules of warfare," after promising Booth "to treat Captain Beall as a prisoner of war."<sup>77</sup>

Alger's "Life of Edwin Forrest" tells<sup>78</sup> a story of John McCullough's rooming with Booth at the National Hotel in Washington immediately before the murder. One night he was suddenly awakened by tears dropping upon his face from the eyes of some one standing beside him. Looking up, he saw Booth.

<sup>77</sup> *Magazine of History*, vol. 43, no. 1 (1931). See also *Southern Historical Society Papers*, vol. xxxii; pp. 99-101. G. A. Foote: "Old Watering Places in Warren County" (pamphlet).

<sup>78</sup> ii, 146.

"Why, what is the matter?" he asked.

"My God," replied Booth ("already burdened with his monstrous crime, and speaking in a tone of long-drawn melancholy indescribably pathetic")—"my God, how peacefully you were sleeping! *I cannot sleep.*"

In a telegram to John T. Ford from Montreal, dated June 2nd, 1865, McCullough said:

I left Washington on Monday evening, March 26th, and have not been there since.

This was accepted as evidence of the same validity as if the fact had been testified to by McCullough in person on the witness stand.<sup>79</sup> McCullough could not have been at the National Hotel "two or three nights before the assassination."

In *McClure's Magazine* for December 1923 an article, "The Lincoln I Knew," gave the recollections of Joseph Christian as reported by Test Dalton and E. Albert Apple. This Christian was represented to have been Lincoln's "valet coachman" and to have left the President's service about a month before the assassination. He told of meeting and drinking with Booth at a hostelry in Baltimore on the afternoon of April 14th. Whether Christian imposed on the authors or they invented him is a question that may never be settled; but it is certain that John Booth was in Washington all day on the 14th, that Lincoln never had a "valet coachman," and that the coachman at the Executive Mansion, as Washington directories attest, was the rotund Irishman Francis P. Burke.

Superstitions of divers kinds gathered around Lincoln after his death. People spoke, for example, of the bright star that appeared on the day of his second inaugural ceremony. Smith Stimmel was in the escort from the Union Light Guard that followed the President's carriage as it returned to the Executive Mansion. Along Pennsylvania Avenue he noticed the crowd gazing upward, and he looked toward the quarter of the heavens at which some were

<sup>79</sup> Conspiracy Trial, June 8, 1865.

pointing. ". . . There in plain view," he says, "shining out in all her beauty, was the planet Venus. It was a little after midday at the time I saw it, possibly near one o'clock; the sun seemed to be a little west of the meridian, the planet a little east." <sup>80</sup>

It was all due to the clear atmosphere and other favoring conditions, Stimmel thought. But the superstitious ascribed various meanings to it and Lincoln's murder gave it, in their minds, a peculiar significance.

Then there was the "mystic number" seven, whose connection with Lincoln so impressed Osborn H. Oldroyd that he wrote a brochure about it. Oldroyd mentioned that:

Lincoln's Christian name and surname have each seven letters.

Lincoln was sworn into the House of Representatives on December 7th, 1847.

He was elected by the people seven times—four times to the Illinois Legislature, once to the House of Representatives, twice to the Presidency.

He voted for the Wilmot Proviso forty-two times ( $7 \times 6$ ).

He was shot on April 14th ( $7 \times 2$ ).

His body left Washington on April 21st ( $7 \times 3$ ).

There was more of the same thing, carefully selected to fit!

Superstition appeared, too, in regard to the Military Commission which tried Mrs. Surratt, Doctor Mudd, Herold, Paine, Atzerodt, Spangler, Arnold, and O'Laughlin. Students of the Conspiracy Trial know that the Commission was an anomalous body without proper jurisdiction and that its procedure and findings were open to the severest criticism.

A rumor sprang up that within a few years all the members of the Commission died violent deaths. Lew Wallace, a member of the Commission (and better known as the author of "Ben Hur") in his autobiography (1906) stated that in 1892, twenty-seven years after the trial, all the members of the Commission were living except Colonel Tompkins, who died at seventy-three, and General Hunter, "who lived to over four-score years."

Jesse W. Weik published a curious story that had been told him

<sup>80</sup> *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, January 1927; pp. 27-28.

by a Miss Porterfield. He said that in April 1865 she was a school-girl, and she and her mother had been making a stay in Washington, where, through a friend who lived at the National Hotel, she became acquainted with John Booth. On the morning of the 13th she met him on Pennsylvania Avenue and he inquired whether she was studying Latin. "Yes," she answered. Then he asked: "Is *tyrannis* spelled with two *ns* or two *rs*?"

Miss Porterfield obligingly wrote this down for Weik and it was printed in full in the *Century Magazine* for February 1913. Inasmuch as Weik thought it worth preserving, it is briefly alluded to here.

How was Lincoln carried from the box to the Petersen house? Some said on a shutter, others said in the rocking chair in which he had been sitting. There is no evidence for either. Who carried him? Many have been named. Major Rathbone and a Major Potter, "assisted by others," said the *Intelligencer* (April 15th), which later (May 4th) mentioned "Gustavus Clark, formerly of Boston" as "one of those who assisted." B. W. Loring, at that time a lieutenant in the United States Navy, stated that he was one of four who carried the President but he did not specify the others.<sup>81</sup> It has been said that Thomas C. Gurlay, the Sir Edward Trenchard of the evening, was among those that helped, and that Col. Otto J. Downing, of Dixon, Illinois, was "one of the five who bore Mr. Lincoln across the street."<sup>82</sup> A rather strong case has been made out for Jacob Soles, Jabez Griffiths, John Corey, and William Sample, artillerymen from Pennsylvania, who were said to have been joined by two other soldiers.<sup>83</sup>

It has been stated with positiveness that Booth, if he had been unable to enter the box, would have shot Lincoln from a "position in the wings." This is a dubious theory. Booth wished to strike a mortal blow—to strike with certainty. He used with that intent a weapon so small that it could be carried unobserved in his palm. The Deringer was for close quarters; its effective

<sup>81</sup> New York *Tribune*, Apr. 13, 1897.

<sup>82</sup> Clark, "Abraham Lincoln in the National Capital"; pp. 104, 108.

<sup>83</sup> New York *Times*, Feb. 8, 1931.



range was limited. An expert in antique firearms (J. K. Scofield of the National Rifle Association of America) has given this opinion to the present writer: "With such a short barrel and the added disadvantage of an extremely short sighting radius, I doubt that you could depend on hitting a target as large as a man at any range longer than twenty or thirty yards." Lincoln in this case would have been a poor target. It is not at all plausible that Booth, running the chance of being immediately seized, would have drawn a larger weapon and attempted to kill the President from across the stage.

"Wilkes Booth's Private Confession of the Murder of President Lincoln," a pamphlet issued in London in 1865, was an absurdity of British origin. The "Confession" purported to be from a manuscript dated April 25th at Garrett's Farm and entrusted to a "friend and accomplice" who "managed to make his escape" from Garrett's "at the time of Harrold's [Herold's] capture and Booth's death." Having reached Liverpool, this nameless associate left the packet in the hands of a third person, who promised not to open it in less than three days after the "accomplice" had quit England. At the end of that interval (the "accomplice" being *en route* to St. Petersburg) the seal was broken and the "Confession" given to the printer.

Amazing Negro dialect is introduced into this effusion, and the murder is thus described:

I was at once confronted by a gentleman in the box, who asked me if I knew who [*sic*] I was intruding upon. I bowed and drew back. I then levelled a pistol with my left hand and fired. . . . In my fall the spur of my boot must have caught something, for my leg was twisted, and when I fell upon the stage I was afraid it was broken. I was thrown forward but by a great effort I managed to recover myself. "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" I exclaimed. . . .

Following the "Confession" is a section headed "Capture, Death, and Burial of Wilkes Booth," pirated from Townsend. The entire pamphlet was translated into French (Paris, 1865), with the addition of a report of the Conspiracy Trial ("Procès des complices").

Conflicting newspaper stories have appeared as to who was the

tenant of the hall bedroom in Petersen's house, where Lincoln lay through that grievous night. Some have conveyed the impression it was John Matthews; others have named Thomas Proctor, a retired lawyer of New York,<sup>84</sup> who, though claiming the room, placed it up two flights of stairs. (It was admitted that Proctor, when he publicly advanced the claim, was of failing memory.) Both Matthews and Proctor—who in 1865 was a clerk in the War Department—were occupying rooms at Petersen's; but the hall bedroom, so often exhibited to visitors through the years, was rented at that time by another clerk of the War Department, William T. Clark, previously of the Thirteenth Massachusetts. This was fully shown by his sister Mrs. H. Estes Wright of Boston and his niece Mrs. Maud O'Leary of Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts.<sup>85</sup>

Many doctors were in attendance that night. Assistant Surgeon Charles A. Leale, U.S.V., a young man in civilian dress, appears to have been first to reach the box. Dr. Charles S. Taft, an army surgeon in uniform, seems to have been next—lifted up from the stage. Dr. A. F. A. King of Washington also was there. Later, Dr. Robert K. Stone, the Lincolns' family physician, and Surgeon-General J. K. Barnes, were summoned to Petersen's.<sup>86</sup> Doctor Stone testified that Mrs. Lincoln sent for him immediately after the shooting. Maunsell B. Field, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, brought Doctor Hall, "one of the most distinguished surgeons in the District," to the Petersen house.<sup>87</sup> Official minutes of the President's condition from eleven o'clock that night were kept by Dr. Ezra W. Abbott. The *Century Magazine* for February 1893 published an account written by Taft from notes made directly after the events by direction of Secretary Stanton. Leale issued in his later years a privately printed brochure containing the text of an address in which he presented his own special and rather egotistical version, declaring he had prolonged Lincoln's life.

<sup>84</sup> New York *Times*, Oct. 1-5, 1921.

<sup>85</sup> O. H. Oldroyd, "The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln"; pp. 37-38. New York *Times*, Oct. 4, 1921.

<sup>86</sup> J. E. Buckingham, "Reminiscences and Souvenirs"; pp. 20-24.

<sup>87</sup> Field, "Memories of Many Men"; pp. 321-329. Baker, "History of the United States Secret Service"; pp. 468-471.

## 10.

The distinguished French actor, Edmond Got, sociétaire of the Comédie Française of Paris, from 1840 to 1892 kept a journal which was published in 1910, nine years after his death. Under date of April 30th, 1865, it has a remarkable entry which, put into English, reads as follows:

The assassination of President Lincoln—a few days after the capture of Richmond and therefore just about at the very end of the interminable War of Secession, in which victory went to the Northern States—and I knew the chief actor in it.

Actor is the word. It is three months since Fechter [Charles Albert Fechter, who created the rôle of Armand Duval in "La dame aux camélias" in 1852 and was known for his "blond Hamlet"] sent to me Booth, a celebrated tragedian of New York, with a strong letter of recommendation. Booth wished to spend a little time in Paris. [Fechter was in London.]

He is an extremely handsome fellow, vigorous-looking and of distinguished manner; well enough educated but speaking French hardly at all.

I courteously offered him the hospitality of my home until he could rent an apartment and engage a carriage by the month, for he wished to maintain the style of a gentleman.

He lived in my house for three days, seeking through me to make himself *au courant* with the artistic and social life here. Several times, I remember, when we were smoking, he talked to me about Julius Cæsar, Shakespeare, and Brutus—especially Brutus. . . .

"What do you in France think of Brutus?"

"At college we admire him in the Greek version, on Plutarch's testimony. But, fundamentally, what was Brutus save an ungrateful and sinister dreamer—a sophist in his very blood? Did he not pronounce judgment on himself, and on the part he played, in that final cry of his: 'Virtue, thou art nothing but a name!'"

And Booth, disconcerted, nervously changed the conversation. I remember that now. When he was no longer in my home, I saw him pretty often. He made the round of the theatres, the tour of the city, progressing rapidly in Parisian civilization. To such an extent that I presented him to a pretty girl of my acquaintance whom he had noticed at the Porte-Saint-Martin in "The Filibusterers of the Sonora."

But what was my surprise one morning at hearing this young person—and she was no timid soul, either—relate, in utter dismay, that Booth was a madman. She said that he would get up in the night and walk in

his sleep and jabber with spirits; that she was frightened and was going to escape to Nice without bidding him good-bye. . . .

Shortly afterward Booth—the sanest man in the world, in appearance at least—came to take farewell of me and set out for America. . . .

“It is necessary for me to return,” he said.

It was he who, during the course of a theatrical performance, shot President Lincoln and got away without being seized. . . .

He’s a fellow they will not capture alive; I’ll guarantee that. For I am aware that he had his *idée fixe*, even when he was in France. . . . He has struggled with it in vain. . . . On his return he succumbed to it.

This sounds plausible, and the Gallic flavor is amusing; but it cannot be true. From November 9th, 1864, when John Booth came to the National Hotel in Washington, *five* months before the murder, he was never absent long enough for a voyage to France, a residence of a fortnight or perhaps more in Paris, and the return trip to America. This was shown by the register of the hotel, a certified memorandum from which was accepted in evidence at the Conspiracy Trial. It is not possible that Booth could have been in France at a time prior by three months, or anything like three months, to April 30th, 1865.

F. Lauriston Bullard, chief editorial writer of the Boston *Herald*, who made long study of this puzzle, and with whom the present writer corresponded regarding it, stated that his researches “have yielded nothing but wild tales.” Neither he nor Philip Hale, who also was interested in the problem, was able to discover any other reference to this alleged visit of Booth’s. “Yet Edmond Got,” he said, “was a man of high character, serious and dignified.”

It has been asserted that the entry in Got’s diary “confirms in part documents in the Booth dossier in Washington,” but these “documents” appear to be imaginary. It has been further asserted that early in 1865 John Booth was sent to France as the agent of Jefferson Davis to appeal to Napoleon III to save the Confederacy in return for the European monopoly of Southern cotton. If ever there was “evidence” of this impossible mission, it eluded the agents of the War Department. There is no proof that John Booth was at any time on the Continent.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>88</sup> The reference in a letter of Edwin’s to Mr. and Mrs. Stoddard (Jan. 1863), quoted in Skinner’s “The Last Tragedian” (pp. 69-70), is not conclusive.



If it be suggested that Got's Booth was an impostor, some one may well ask, "Why, then, did he talk of Julius Cæsar and Brutus—'especially Brutus'?" Was it to persuade the French actor that his visitor belonged to the family famous for acting Shakespeare—the family in which Brutus was so much more than a rôle?

## Afterword

IN an editorial article on Monday, April 17th, 1865, Henry J. Raymond of the *New York Times* said of Lincoln's murder:

It is as when there "was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

We follow in the contemporary press the fortnight's progress of the funeral train across the country through lines of mourners; we read "O Captain! My Captain!" and sample the printed texts of rhetorical eulogies, and search the recollections of those who saw those days—we may even have talked with men and women who shared that grief and joined in the dirges, or who viewed the ravaged face of the dead. From all this we might conclude that Raymond wrote no more than literal truth.

He referred, however, to the North alone, and he must be understood as meaning the *loyal* North. For even in the North there was considerable open rejoicing, of which we may learn from many sources. Bystanders maintained that a "street operator" in the widely disloyal city of New York was overheard to say, "This thing ought to have happened four years ago." "Traitor! Hang him!" was the cry, and forthwith angry citizens made ready to suspend him from a lamppost in front of the Bank of North America; but he managed to escape. A German, Genter by name, employed in a tannery at Duquesne, Pennsylvania, expressed "great delight." Repeatedly thrown into a tan vat, he was finally rescued and discharged. Among the manuscripts of the McLellan Collection is a letter from Rachel Miller of Conneaut, Ohio, to her husband (seemingly in the army), telling of a woman neigh-

bor who, when she heard the news, "went out in the street and jumped up and down and said she was glad of it." At Newport, Midshipman Frederic G. Hyde, making entry in his diary for April 15th, declared, "I never felt the loss of any friend more than the loss of President Lincoln!"—but also noted that "A man in Fall River was mobbed for saying, 'This is the best news I have heard in four years.'" These were but typical outbursts of Copperhead feeling. A Copperhead in the vicinity of Waterbury, Connecticut, was said to have displayed a flag bearing the words THE DEVIL IS DEAD.

Washington's *National Republican* of April 26th published a San Francisco dispatch in which it was reported that at Green Valley in California a meeting was held for the purpose of exulting over Lincoln's death. When troops were sent to break up the meeting, ringleaders barricaded the house, and not until fired upon did they surrender. At Marietta, Indiana, an anvil was loaded and fired and, amid singing and dancing, an effigy of Lincoln was carried in procession about the village streets and then burned.

Northern radicals, if not exactly jubilant, tended to be cheerfully resigned and acquiescent. For instance, Representative George W. Julian of Indiana, in his "Political Recollections," says that when first he heard of the murder and "that rebel assassins were about to take the town," he "grew suddenly cold, heart-sick and almost helpless"—but he "soon rallied."

I spent most of the afternoon [of the 15th] in a political caucus, held for the purpose of considering the necessity for a new Cabinet and a line of policy less conciliatory than that of Mr. Lincoln; and while everybody was shocked at his murder, the feeling was nearly universal that the accession of Johnson to the presidency would prove a godsend to the country.

In their Easter sermons, many of the clergy deplored Lincoln's "natural gentleness," and appeared inclined to view his withdrawal as a species of divine interposition.

In the South a few voiced honest regret. Gen. R. S. Ewell in a letter set down his "unqualified abhorrence and indignation"; Gen. J. E. Johnston and Gen. Roger A. Pryor spoke in the same vein; there were others whose utterance was clear and decided.

Nevertheless, for the most part the frank words of John S. Wise in "The End of an Era" may be regarded as trustworthy:

. . . Perhaps I ought to chronicle that the announcement was received with sentiments of sorrow. If I did, I should be lying for sentiment's sake. Among the higher officers and the most intelligent and conservative men, the assassination caused a shudder of horror at the heinousness of the act, and at the thought of its possible consequences; but among the thoughtless, the desperate, and the ignorant, it was hailed as a sort of retributive justice. In maturer years I have been ashamed of what I felt and said when I heard of that awful calamity. . . . We were desperate and vindictive, and whosoever denies it forgets or is false.

Jefferson Davis, while fleeing southward from Richmond, received at Charlotte, North Carolina, a telegram from Gen. John C. Breckinridge, announcing the murder. During the Conspiracy Trial, Lewis F. Bates testified that Davis, at the end of a speech, read this telegram aloud and commented, "If it were to be done, it were better it were well done." This testimony—which suggests that Bates was familiar with Macbeth's

If it were done when 't is done, then 't were well  
It were done quickly—

was flatly contradicted by Davis in "The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," and the denial was confirmed by Stephen R. Mallory, Secretary of the Navy in Davis' cabinet, through an extract from Mallory's papers as given in *McClure's Magazine* for January 1901.

Davis in his book observes that although Lincoln's death, "in view of its political consequences," was "a great misfortune to the South," yet "we could not be expected to mourn" for so relentless an enemy. It may be conceded that L. F. Bates was a false witness; but Davis' own phraseology is grudging and ungracious—rather in keeping with the character of the man who, according to J. B. Jones (in "A Rebel War Clerk's Diary") had denounced Lincoln as His Majesty Abraham the First, and of whom Sam Houston is reported to have said: "I know Jeff Davis well. He is as ambitious as Lucifer and as cold as a lizard."

At a Confederate meeting in the court house square of Shreveport, Louisiana, on April 29th, 1865, a Colonel Flournoy of Arkansas made an address that the Shreveport *Sentinel* was con-



strained to think "in some respects rather uncharitable and ill-judged." The Colonel compared John Booth to Marcus Brutus, and predicted for him a similar abiding fame.

Manuscript copies of flatulent stanzas entitled "Our Brutus" and usually attributed to Judge A. W. Terrell of Texas were passed about in the South. In this effusion, Booth was glorified as

He who dared break the rod  
Of the blackamoor's god,  
All the hosts of the despot defying. . . .

A portion of it, set to music as a vocal solo by E. B. Armand, was published in New Orleans in 1868. Another version appeared in the *Confederate Veteran* as late as April 1913.

In the 'sixties an attempt was made at Troy, Alabama, to put up a monument in honor of Booth in Court House Square. Permission was refused, the owner placed the monument on his own land, and there it was reported to have stood until 1921, when it was removed by order of the town council.

Why did Booth shoot Lincoln? The question long has busied ingenious minds. That there must have been some individual or group "higher up"—this notion is a hardy perennial displaying many varieties.

The press made known that G. G. McGeer of Vancouver assured a Canadian parliamentary committee on banking that international bankers, desiring establishment of the gold standard, hired Booth to put Lincoln out of the way. A correspondent of the present writer's is confident that the "Whiskey Ring" did the hiring, and that Thaddeus Stevens was mixed up in the business.

Far from new is the charge that Andrew Johnson was the power behind the Deringer—it dates from an open letter "To the People of the United States," printed in the *Montreal Gazette* of May 23rd, 1865, over the signature of Beverley Tucker, for whose arrest President Johnson on May 2nd had offered \$25,000. Johnson had proclaimed that Lincoln's "atrocious murder" was incited, concerted, and procured by and between Jefferson Davis, Jacob Thompson, Clement C. Clay, Beverley Tucker, George N. Sanders, William C. Cleary, and "other rebels and traitors;" and he had

offered rewards for the arrest of those named—graded from \$100,000 for Davis to \$10,000 for Cleary. The fiery Tucker replied in no bland terms.

He pointed to “the fact that Andrew Johnson is the only solitary individual, of the thirty-five millions of souls comprised in that land, who could possibly realize any interest or benefit” from the murder; he referred to what he said was Booth’s call upon Johnson; alleged that Booth “unquestionably could have been” taken alive. “Dead men,” he said, “tell no tales, and the *wanton* hushed voice of this unhappy man, leaves behind his bloody tragedy a fearful mystery.”

Here is the stuff of which myth is formed. The card that Booth left at the Kirkwood (Tucker badly misquotes it) was not intended for Johnson. Robert R. Jones, clerk at the hotel, testified on May 13th, 1865:

I gave a card of J. Wilkes Booth to Col. Browning, Mr. Johnson’s secretary; it was put in the box. I gave him that card and it was left for Col. Browning.

It was *not* unquestionable that Booth might have been captured alive. Booth’s voice was by no means hushed. His letter “To Whom It May Concern” and his “diary” leave small room for mystery.

Tucker was a resentful and angry man, striking back defensively. So was George N. Sanders, who in the *Gazette* of May 24th addressed a letter to “Titus Oates Holt,” care of E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War “and co-conspirator.” This cannot be pleaded for those who with well-considered animus developed by oblique hints what Prof. Allan Nevins rightly has called “the bizarre hypothesis” that Stanton incited and abetted the murder. Of Stanton’s peculiarities there is sufficient evidence for those who care to harp on them; of an earlier and quite different Stanton—a Stanton characterized by Donn Piatt as “young, ardent, and of a most joyous nature,” with a “heartly and contagious” laugh—there is evidence, too, for the fairminded; of a blood-guilty Stanton there is no real evidence whatever. As for Stanton’s fellowship with extreme radicals, this, as Dewitt has said, “receives support from no authentic testimony coming from himself at first hand.”

Soon after the murder, James M. Mason (the man who had drafted the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850), lingering abroad, informed the British public that John Booth, far from sympathizing with the South, was actually a Northern radical and killed Lincoln in order that radical schemes might have free play. Stanton, Mason charged, had sent out false reports regarding Booth and Booth's deed. Since the day of Sanders and of Mason, elaborate attack has been made upon Stanton as the effective instrument of an ill-defined coterie of Northern politicians. Though "at every word a reputation dies," the indictment admittedly is without support in any real evidence.

Strangely enough, Catholics or ex-Catholics have been foremost in ascribing Lincoln's murder to the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Papers in the Department of State reveal that Henri de Ste. Marie, the member of the Pontifical Zouaves who informed against Surratt, stated at Rome, July 10th, 1866:

I believe he [Surratt] is protected by the clergy, and that the murder is the result of a deep-laid plot, not only against the life of President Lincoln, but against the existence of the republic, as we are aware that priesthood and royalty are and always have been opposed to liberty.

The writings of Chiniquy and Burke McCarty's "The Suppressed Truth about the Assassination of Lincoln" have expanded on this theme to no purpose, and can be regarded as nothing more than literary oddities. It is not true that all, or nearly all, of the ten persons brought to trial were Roman Catholics; only four were of the Catholic faith: Mrs. Surratt, John H. Surratt, Michael O'Laughlin, and Dr. Samuel A. Mudd. Booth was confirmed in the Protestant Episcopal Church and at the last was buried according to its rites.

As long ago as September 21st, 1872, Eugene Lawrence said in *Harper's Weekly*:

Mr. Johnson and the majority of the Northern people, in the first rage of grief, fixed upon Davis, Saunders [Sanders], Clay, and Tucker, as the real assassins, and a large reward was offered for their arrest. Nor was it unlikely that persons who were known to have committed deeds almost equally atrocious would shrink from the last step in crime. Yet the proof failed. The plot has never yet been traced beyond its active agents.

On January 24th, 1876, the New York *Tribune* published a letter from Chief Justice George Shea of the Marine Court, in which he said that at Washington in May 1866 Thaddeus Stevens had pronounced the "evidence" on the basis of which the rewards were offered to be "insufficient in itself, and incredible." Shea wrote:

I am not likely ever to forget the earnest manner in which Mr. Stevens then said to me: "Those men are no friends of mine. They are public enemies; and I would treat the South as a conquered country and settle it politically upon the policy best suited for ourselves. But I know these men, sir. They are gentlemen, and incapable of being assassins."

The Hon. A. J. Rogers, member of the Select Committee on the Assassination, had asserted in 1866 that there was no evidence, either verbal or written, "worthy of the slightest credit," to associate any of those "charged therewith, now at liberty, with that assassination, directly or indirectly." At the Conspiracy Trial of 1865 not only was nothing of evidential value offered to prove a "general conspiracy," but in fact the prosecution laid itself open to charges of suborning perjury. The story that Booth was selected by lot at a conclave in Memphis is hardly more flimsy than the other story that he was the instrument of Southern agents in Canada. Neither has any decent evidence to support it. The Montreal *Telegraph* expressly affirmed that Booth "was not cordially received by Southern men here, it being reported that he was a Federal spy, and in this light he was generally, although perhaps untruly regarded." Booth described himself, even in the abduction plot, as "A Confederate doing duty upon his own responsibility"; and in the murder as "God's instrument," hoping for no gain.

Although not believing that the cabinet at Richmond had ever argued the matter, or that any other member of that cabinet had sanctioned violence, William H. Seward (so Orville Browning recorded) thought Judah P. Benjamin, Confederate Secretary of State, had encouraged and subsidized Booth. It seems to be true that Benjamin, both as Secretary of State and previously as Secretary of War, had a way of detailing Confederate officers for



exceptional service under his direct orders. Booth was not, however, a Confederate officer, and nothing has at any time been produced from Benjamin's archives or elsewhere to suggest that the two men had so much as conferred or that Benjamin had supplied funds for any undertaking.

In Chapter Twelve of the present volume will be found a discussion of the foolish yarn—extensively accepted by Southerners, including that professed historian Lyon G. Tyler—that Booth's deed was in vengeance for the hanging of John Y. Beall. A tenuous assumption is that Booth, knowing his voice was gone and his acting career was over, killed Lincoln merely to win fame, inasmuch as fame upon the stage was unattainable. Booth, as we have seen, *had* won fame upon the stage. His acting career was by no means over. After getting rid of a cold that had affected him in New Orleans, he completed in May 1864 five weeks of "most successful performances" in Boston; in November took part, with approval, in the gala performance of "Julius Cæsar" in New York; and early in 1865 appeared twice in Washington. He continued to be regarded by managers as a "star" attraction; and, as we know from statements in the War Department's archives, his brother Junius not only had urged him to "follow his profession" but expected him to be in New York to play in another benefit for the Shakespeare Fund on April 22nd.

There is no need to imagine vain things or to assemble a *mélange* of scandalous inferences against any particular individual or small group, whether of the North or of the South. The whole affair cuts deeper than that.

The Southern cotton planters had bestowed the term "fanatic" on all exponents of human liberty; but it may well be doubted whether a more fanatical devotion ever has been seen—unless, perhaps, among Mohammedan tribesmen—than was that of the South to the idea of human bondage as the divine cornerstone of society. Toward that idea the most specious logic, the most disingenuous oratory, the most incendiary journalism were vigorously directed; and even the Church was drawn to its support. The hatred of Lincoln that existed both in the South and among the Copperheads of the North was in itself a testimony to his identity

with the cause of freedom. Nothing in the character of Lincoln as a person could have moved Robert Toombs of Georgia to exclaim (as he did in the Senate on January 7th, 1861): "He is, therefore, an enemy of the human race, and deserves the execration of all mankind!" It was the same enduring hatred that, when the Virginia House of Delegates passed a resolution in 1928 to honor Lincoln's birthday, moved Lyon G. Tyler to write a long and bitter letter to the Richmond *Times-Dispatch*, protesting against any respect for "Lincoln the Barbarian."

The secessionist mind, Henry Adams wrote, was "haunted by suspicion, by *idées fixes*, by violent morbid excitement." John Booth, from his early years in and near Baltimore, had been caught up into all this, and its result was a kind of progressive monomania in him. Mrs. Anne Gilbert, who had acted with him, thought his frame of mind comparable to that of a young nihilist in autocratic Russia. Of the real Lincoln he knew practically nothing; Lincoln was to him the heartless despot of malicious caricature. Henry Winter Davis, Booth's Know-Nothing leader, finally turned Republican, but a radical one, so hating Lincoln that, if Lincoln had lived, Davis would, it is said, have attempted his impeachment. Booth's professional journeyings had taken him through both the South and the North, and everywhere he came upon hatred of Lincoln from one motive or another.

It was rife in New York and Philadelphia, and John Booth often sojourned in each of them; it was rife in his old home town of Baltimore, where the abduction plot was launched, and in Washington, where that plot was encouraged. It was amazingly rife in disloyal journals within the Federal lines. We are not wholly surprised that the Richmond *Dispatch* referred to Lincoln as "the Chimpanzee" and "the Ape"; that it called him "an ignorant and vulgar backwoods pettifogger" and "a vulgar tyrant" with "no more idea of statesmanship than as a means of making money," who "still cries for blood"; that it said of him: "It would be impossible to find another such ass in the United States." But within the Federal lines we meet pronouncements like these:

From the New York *Copperhead* (May 30th, 1863)—

The people hired Abe Lincoln to maintain the Constitution and Laws of the United States. As he has wholly neglected to perform his

duty, according to agreement, we submit that he is morally bound to hand over his salary to Hon. C. L. Vallandigham and others who have labored and done their best to perform his duty for him—i.e., to preserve the Constitution and the Laws.

From the *Illinois State Register* (August 4th, 1864), published in Lincoln's town of Springfield—

To-day is "Massa Linkum's" day of fasting, humiliation and prayer. As the Register thinks the nation has ample reason for fasting, because Lincoln has made food so high; for humiliation at the disgrace his miserable, imbecile policies have brought upon us; and for prayer that God, in his goodness, will spare us a second term of such a president, the day will be observed by the employes of this establishment, and no paper may be expected to-morrow.

But there was worse, as for example:  
'This from *The South* of Baltimore (June 7th, 1861)—

Two posts standant;  
One beam crossant;  
One rope pendent;  
Abram on the end on 't,  
Glorious! splendent.

Or this from the New York *Copperhead* (July 11th, 1863)—

We trust that long-legged Kentuckian at Washington will duly heed these pregnant suggestions. Behave yourself in future, boss, or we shall be obliged to make an island of your head and stick it on the end of a pole.

Then, for the first time, Lincoln's cocoa-nut will be *well posted*.

Or this from the ineffable Mark M. Pomeroy's La Crosse (Wisconsin) *Democrat* (August 29th, 1864)—

The man who votes for Lincoln now is a traitor. Lincoln is a traitor and murderer. He who pretending to war for, wars against the constitution of our country is a traitor, and Lincoln is one of those men. He who calls and allures men to certain butchery, is a murderer, and Lincoln has done all this. Had any former Democratic President warred upon the Constitution or trifled with the destinies of the nation as Lincoln has he would have been hurled to perdition long since. And if he is elected to misgovern for another four years, we trust some bold hand will pierce his heart with dagger point for the public good.

The *Old Guard*, a New York magazine, published in May 1865 (copies were out in April) a section with the running-head "Timely Readings from the Poets." This contained such excerpts from the English poets as:

Fear no stain;  
A tyrant's blood doth wash the hand that spills it.  
(Cartwright's "Siege")

Tyranny  
Is the worst of treasons.  
(Byron's "Two Foscari")

Tyrants seldom die  
Of a dry death; it waiteth at their gate,  
Drest in the color of their robes of state,  
(Alley's "Henry VII")

"The independent assassin . . .," wrote Dr. William Brown- ing in his "American Assassins," "often represents the crest of a morbid wave including many others in the community. It is clear that, excluding conspiracies, there must be many near-assassins for each one that makes the attempt. . . . We can be sure the animus in greater or less degree is widespread." Lamon in his "Recollections" says that during the "most anxious and trying period" letter-writers were "so outrageous and vindictive that if Booth had wrapped his bullet in a shred of their correspondence he might have lodged a vindication of his crime in the brain of his victim."

Through the fanatical John Booth the diffused hatred of Abraham Lincoln struck. Mark Pomeroy and his species had their wish. After that demoralizing winter of 1864-1865 and the collapse of the abduction plot, Booth determined upon murder—which he called "sacrifice." It was to him the way of duty; it might also be the path of glory; but "something decisive & great must be done." Slavery he termed "one of the greatest blessings . . . that God ever bestowed upon a favored nation." ". . . That cause," wrote Grant, "was, I believe, one of the worst for which a people ever fought." . . . And the blood of Lincoln was upon that cause.



## PARDON

Pains the sharp sentence the breast in whose wrath it was uttered,  
Now thou art cold;  
Vengeance the headlong, and justice with purpose close muttered,  
Loosen their hold.

Death brings atonement; he did that whereof ye accuse him,—  
Murder accurst;  
But, from the crisis of crime in which Satan did lose him,  
Suffered the worst.

Harshly the red dawn arose on a deed of his doing,  
Never to mend;  
But harsher days he wore out in the bitter pursuing  
And the wild end.

To lift the pale flag of truce, wrap those mysteries round him,  
In whose avail  
Madness that moved, and the swift retribution that found him,  
Falter and fail.

So the soft purples that quiet the heavens with mourning,  
Willing to fall,  
Lend him one fold, his illustrious victim adorning  
With wider pall.

Back to the cross, where the Saviour, uplifted in dying,  
Bade all souls live,  
Turns the reft bosom of Nature, his mother, low sighing,  
"Greatest, forgive!"

JULIA WARD HOWE

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George S. Bryan was born in 1879 and is a graduate of Amherst. He has served on the staffs of the new International Encyclopedia and the Encyclopedia Americana, and was managing editor of the New Standard Encyclopedia. He has been a contributor to other important works of reference including the Dictionary of American Biography. His books include biographies of Sam Houston and Edison, and he has published articles on American history in a number of magazines.

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